



## OUR 25th BIRTHDAY ISSUE



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## 25 Years of Great Advice from REAL SIMPLE

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Cover **Photograph** by Chelsea Kyle Food Styling by **Michelle Gatton Prop Styling** by Nicole Louie Recipe by **Molly Yeh** 

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## The beauty of wood without the upkeep



TimberTech is a better, more sustainable choice than wood. Crafted using proprietary technology and a majority of recycled materials, our decking promises the beauty and warmth of natural wood without the maintenance of sanding, staining, or sealing.



## Happy Birthday to Us!



**REAM JOB**. I've never been one to use the phrase—it always struck me as kinda cloying, juvenile. I've loved my career (who knew an English major could even have one?!), and I've worked at some pretty awesome places with some pretty amazing people. But dream job? Not a thing. Then, three years ago, I landed mine.

I love what I do—no, I mean I really love it. First and foremost because I get to work with the most brilliant team of creative minds in the media. (Hi, gang! If I haven't told you yet today, you rock.) And because I truly believe in our mission. REAL SIMPLE has brought me and countless others a sense of peace and calm, of beauty and balance, of (relative) control over our corner of the chaotic world. It has improved our

physical and mental health. And it has, of course, provided endless ingenious tips for cleaning, organizing, and making life easier. Over the last quarter century, our audience has grown and grown, the brand's tractor beam pulling in a community of millions of loving and mutually supportive cheerleaders (just look at our Instagram comments to see what I mean). The reason people loved it 25 years ago—it was a success right out of the gate—and love it still is that it covers what we need to know, does real reporting and trusted vetting, and meets the audience (hey, that's you!) where they are. The editors see you and get you, because we are you.

And we stand on the shoulders of some very capable and organized giants, the former editors of RS. I asked a bunch of them what they thought made the place special and what has stayed with them from their time here. See their responses at right and on the next page—it's an editors' note! (Grammar nerds get it.) I could see my team giving the same answers, proof that the DNA of REAL SIMPLE has never changed and never will. It taps into a universal desire: to live a happy, beautiful, real, simple life. Pretty dreamy.

Lauren lannotti

EDITOR IN CHIEF

LET'S CONNECT! Follow me on Instagram at @laureniannotti.

## **From Former Editors**

"Here are the things I've done in the last 10 hours that I learned from REAL SIMPLE: didn't use soap to wash my face in the morning; wiggled the mascara wand at the base of my lashes to fake wearing eyeliner; made a fantastic breakfast smoothie: found my keys in the bowl near the door, where they always live; tried to sit up straight once I got to work."

KRISTIN VAN OGTROP, MANAGING EDITOR, 2003 TO 2016

"I have so many memories and stories from RS, but one that sticks out is when I was on the Today show talking about the best family pets, and a fellow quest that day, a rapper, posed for pics with the guinea pig we had with us!"

SARAH HUMPHREYS **COLLINS, EXECUTIVE** EDITOR, 1999 TO 2016

## WHEN THE CLOCK STRIKES DINNER, THINK STOUFFER'S.



"The best thing I learned: Make your washer-dryer area pretty— we spend more time there than we realize! A cheerful wallpaper design or poppy paint color can be a visual mood booster."

LESLIE YAZEL, EDITOR IN CHIEF,

LESLIE YAZEL, EDITOR IN CHIEF, 2016 TO 2019

"What I remember is the feeling of camaraderie as we developed stories and executed photo shoots. We were all at the start of our careers and eager to make an impact. I feel incredibly lucky to have worked with such brilliant colleagues, many of whom have gone on to be successful in their own ventures."

KAY CHUN, FOOD EDITOR,

2000 TO 2004

"Hardly a day goes by that I don't call up my vast mental archive of REAL SIMPLE tricks: use the nonsharp side of my knife to scrape food off my cutting board to preserve the blade; coat a tablespoon with a little oil before measuring something sticky, like honey or molasses; keep complete bed sets inside a single pillowcase so you're not

I learned at REAL SIMPLE was that making someone's day a tiny bit easier or happier isn't tiny at all."

JENNY ROSENSTRACH, SPECIAL

PROJECTS EDITOR, 2001 TO 2006

unfolding sheets in the linen

closet to find the right one. These

things are so tiny, but what

"I still think about the epic meetings to pitch items for the December gift guide. Imagine walking into a room filled with the coolest, most chic, most delightful gifts. Selecting items that readers might decide to give their loved ones felt like an honor. We were giddy the whole day about it."

BRANDI BROXSON, FEATURES EDITOR, 2015 TO 2022

"I have so many sensational memories from my 12 years at REAL SIMPLE. Launching the REAL SIMPLE Home with so many incredible teammates, meeting Shaquille O'Neal (I came up to about his waist), and traveling around the country to help some deserving readers organize their homes sit toward the top of my list."

STEPHANIE SISCO, HOME DIRECTOR, 2009 TO 2021

"I ran RS during the pandemic, and I appreciated that our role was to make a calming experience for readers—from the tips in our stories to the look of our pages. We were proud to create a lovely thing at a stressful time."

LIZ VACCARIELLO, EDITOR IN CHIEF, 2019 TO 2022

"We knew we weren't splitting the atom, but we could make your life easier, guaranteed."

JENNIFER TUNG, CONTRIBUTING EDITOR, 2000 TO 2010

"My philosophy for the magazine was that if RS could make life easier for women to juggle their multitude of responsibilities, they would be freed up to reach their highest potential—and have a little fun too."

CARRIE TUHY, MANAGING EDITOR, 2000 TO 2004

## REAL SIMPLE by the Numbers



1,867

Total tally of gifts recommended in our holiday gift guides



1,309

Number of easy dinners we've served up



26%

Percentage of covers that have featured flowers



5\*

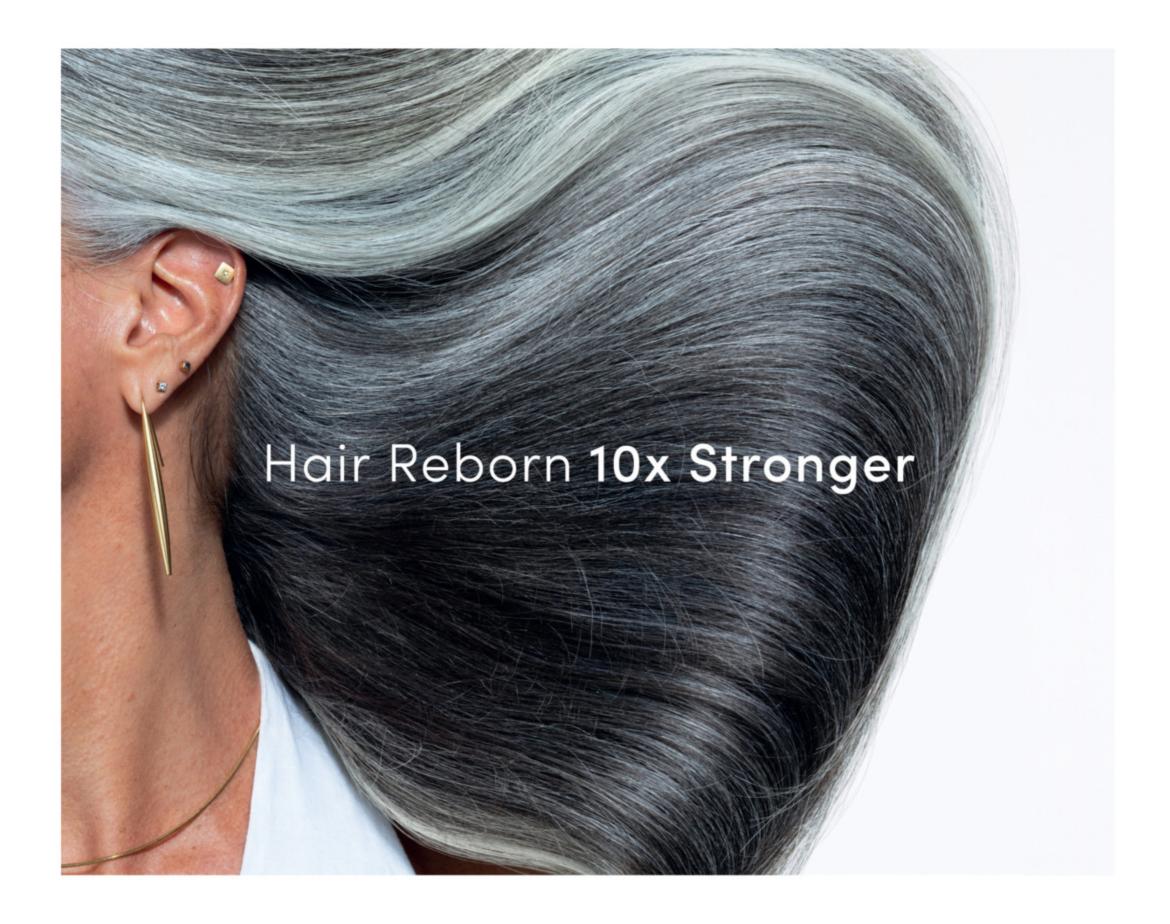
Number of famous faces on our covers

\*We had our first in 2023. Thank you, Kristen Bell!



58,004

Number of pages in all regular issues... so far



## New Dove Intensive Repair

Refills hair with 1 trillion amino acid molecules.





## **EALSIMPL**

best takeaway



"The one-pot Tuna Noodle Bowl recipe from the first issue. I still have the original part of the page I cut out and taped into my recipe book." -Tara Cox

Find the recipe at realsimple .com/tunanoodlebowl.

"How to fold a fitted sheet-

duh! I never get it as perfect

as our home queens do,

but having the technique up

my sleeve sure makes me feel

like a domestic goddess."

—Heather Muir Maffei

Get the step-by-step at

realsimple.com/fittedsheet.

Lauren lannotti **VICE PRESIDENT & EDITOR IN CHIEF** 

> Phoebe Flynn Rich CREATIVE DIRECTOR

> > Lisa Freedman **EXECUTIVE EDITOR**

Tara Cox MANAGING EDITOR

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"That I should refrigerate most cookie dough overnight for a chewy and delicious result!" —Ria Bhagwat



Tiffany Ehasz VICE PRESIDENT & HEAD OF SALES, LIFESTYLE

Allison Kelly **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MARKETING** 

STRATEGIC ACCOUNTS Lisa Sundberg

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"The brilliant idea of using unflavored dental floss to cut a cake beautifully!" -Jennifer Latwis

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**GROWTH** Tyler Hub

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"This is an old one that I still use: Reach for a salad spinner for handwashing delicates. It removes loads of water and is much more gentle than wringing by hand." -Rose Cirrincione

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## The Healthiest Plants Naturally



FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT US AT MONROVIA.COM

## YOUR WORDS

## What have you loved the most about **REAL SIMPLE these last 25 years?**

Hove my family. I'm also a workaholic. REAL SIMPLE has taught me that it's important to carve out time. Reading the magazine is one of my favorite things.

**CARRIE STYLES ESPERANCE, NEW YORK** 



In an attempt to create more peace of mind for myself, I made a commitment: no social media or news in the morning. When I have a new REAL SIMPLE, I take half an hour or so to read through the entire magazine. It's a wellness practice that has changed how I start my days. It's probably the best thing I've done for myself

**The recipes!** Years ago, my doctor was talking about eating healthier, and he suggested I take a look at the recipes in REAL SIMPLE. I was already a subscriber! MICKY BAHLMANN

in many years.

JILL ZAMPERETTI HEINTZ

SHERRILL, NEW YORK

I've been reading **REAL SIMPLE** almost my whole life, and I loved reading it at my grandmother's house. She passed in 2012, but I've kept up my own subscription. I love Modern Manners, though now that I'm an adult, I also enjoy the drinks recipes!

O KELLYJESSICAH

I absolutely adore the Nerding Out column. It's a quick factoid fest, and I always learn something new. For example, I added the word "hibernaculum" to my vocabulary after your hibernation story. I even set up my own cozy, bookand-fuzzy-socksfilled hibernaculum!

I have been a subscriber for all 25 years! I've always liked the book and product recommendations, the features, and the new uses for old things!

O LSTARRH

Over 15 years ago, there was an article about a group of women who took an annual surprise trip. Each year a different person would plan it, and the rest wouldn't know where they were going until a few days beforehand. My best gals and I decided to try it. We've had a Mystery Girls Trip, as we call it, every year since. It's a treasured tradition! MARCY HINES DALLAS





## **REAL SIMPLE intro**duced me to Shout **Color Catcher**

**Sheets.** I (usually!) sort our laundry, but with these I don't have to worry about a new garment transferring color to the rest of the clothes in the wash.

JULIE STEPHENSON MOUNT PLEASANT, SOUTH CAROLINA

I've gotten many great tips from REAL SIMPLE, but the one I use the most is the idea to organize my grocery list by aisle. It makes shopping so much easier. SARA BAXTER DECATUR, GEORGIA

## The life lessons.

My favorite is from a story in the January/ February 2022 issue called "It's OK Not to Talk"—all about how the silent connection between two people is the best kind of intimacy. BRITTANY LITTLE NORTH CAROLINA

I discovered REAL SIMPLE many years ago while staying at a friend's house and have loved it since then. I really like the Clever Items section.

JANET HANEWINKEL ST. LOUIS

I've always loved to eat quiche, but I've been afraid to make one. That changed with April 2024's **Use-It-Up Quiche** recipe on page 87. I've made it over a dozen times! AL KOLCHINSKY

SARASOTA, FLORIDA

GET THE RECIPE AT REALSIMPLE.COM/

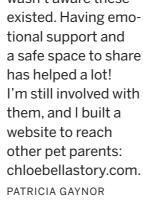
USEITUPQUICHE

More than a year ago, there was an article about pet loss that mentioned support groups. I wasn't aware these

FARMINGDALE, **NEW YORK** 

I especially love the Your Words column. It's great to hear from other subscribers all around the country.

O LYNARAI



## READER OF THE MONTH

## Abby Watson, 29

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZER ORLANDO, FLORIDA O HELPMEIMHUMANFL

## What have you loved the most about REAL SIMPLE?

The peanut butter knife y'all recommended back in 2020 is one kitchen gadget I'll never declutter! (Find it at pbjife.com for \$13)

## Your favorite family recipe:

My mom's best friends' Hoedown Chocolate Chip Pie, which is basically a chocolate chip cookie in pie form. It won first place in a church potluck in the '80s, and it's been a legend ever since.

## The coziest thing in your home:

My green velvet reading chair. I got it for free from a friend in college, and I didn't know then how lucky I was to find the perfect chair.

## Most recent splurge:

A facial. Holy cow, why did no one tell me about them? Best time and money I've ever set aside to relax.

## What's always in your car?

I always have something I need to return to a friend. I've been learning a lot about asking for help from my community rather than buying everything I want or need. At first it's humbling, but then it's absolutely beautiful.

## **NEXT QUESTION**

## Have you ever made a bold color choice that didn't pan out? How'd you fix it?

Send an email (and a photo, if you want!) to yourwords@realsimple.com and let us know your answer. Your response could appear on these pages.

# COURTESY OF EMMA LEE FOR MOSTLY FRENCH; ILLUSTRATION BY ABBEY LOSSING

## **REAL SIMPLE Right Now**

## News You Can Use, Timely Tips & a Bit of Fun







Mostly French features 150 recipes and lots of photos to make you feel like you're in the south of France. \$40;

simonandschuster.com

## MEAL PLAN REMIX

## Lessons from Julia Child's Kitchen

As much as we love meal planning, we may be doing it backward. That's the opinion of Makenna Held, who runs the Courageous Cooking School out of Julia Child's former summer home in Provence, France, and who just wrote a new cookbook, Mostly French. "I plan from the place of seasonality, rather than a strict grocery list based on specific recipes," she says. In other words, she sees what's available and what looks good, and then plans her meals. Of course, she's often shopping in quaint European markets where options can vary, but you can follow her lead in regular grocery stores too. Buy what's fresh and build meals around that. No to barely red strawberries and limp Swiss chard! Yes to stalky asparagus and snappy snap peas!



## LINE OF DEFENSE

## Saline for the Win

In many places, allergy season is starting earlier and lasting longer, thanks in large part to the climate crisis. And according to researchers at Columbia University, more and more people are seeking treatment for pollenrelated issues. So even if you haven't suffered from seasonal allergies before, you might be now, says Neeta Ogden, MD, spokesperson for the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America. Enter: saline. As in, saline eye drops and nasal sprays. "Saline, which is essentially salt water, helps wash out the pollen," Ogden says. She also recommends starting each day by checking Pollen.com or a weather app. "If the pollen count is really high, you're not going to play three rounds of golf or go for a run outside."







## MULTI-SYMPTOM DRY EYE RELIEF

STARRING TINA THE TIRED ONE, DREW THE DRY ONE AND IRENE THE IRRITATED ONE. CO-STARRING THE SORE ONE, THE BURNING ONE, THE STINGING ONE AND THE WATERY ONE.

Systane Complete's preservative-free formula lasts up to 8 hours.

## OPEN YOUR EYES TO LASTING RELIEF.

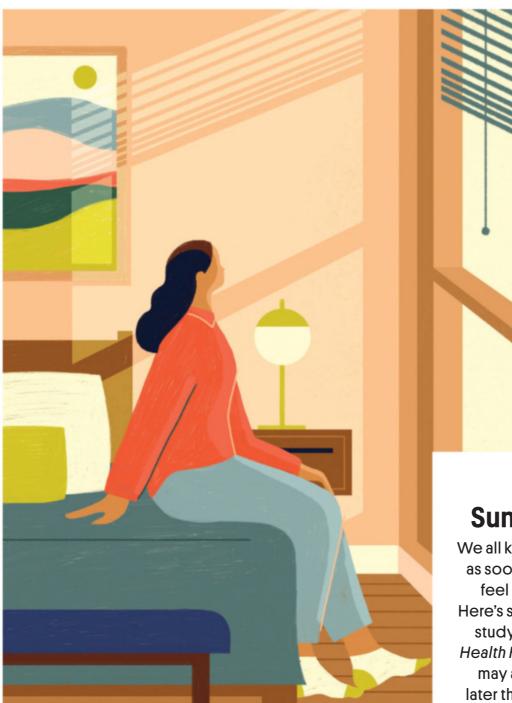
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EXPIRATION DATE 06/30/2025



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## **POWER MOVE**

## **Earth Day Celebrations**

On Tuesday, April 22, over a billion people in 192 countries are expected to celebrate Earth Day. This year, for the 55th anniversary, the theme is renewable energy. Green sources of power—like the sun, wind, and water—are not only healthier for us and our world but are also becoming less expensive. About 850 utility companies in the U.S. currently offer a clean-energy alternative to fossil fuels, so contact yours to see if you can make the switch. Then head over to earthday.org for a ton of info, events, volunteer opportunities, and other ways to show your love for Mother Earth.

## TAKE CARE

## **Sunny Ways Ahead**

We all know that opening the shades as soon as we wake up can help us feel more alert and energized.

Here's some new news from a recent study published in the Journal of Health Psychology: Turns out, the act may also improve sleep quality later that night. Let Morning You do something nice for Tonight You!



## READER DEAL

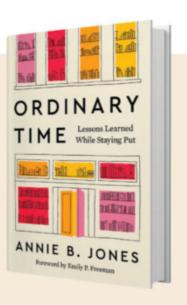
## Save on Brilliant Travel Bottles

The leakproof
Cadence bottles on
page 24 are so smart,
we think you should
stock up! So we called
in a favor: Use the
code REALSIMPLE15
to take 15% off orders
of \$125 or more.
Offer valid through
5/31/25.

## **BOOK IT**

## **Extra Ordinary**

Despite hosting a popular podcast (From the Front Porch) and owning a beloved bookstore (The Bookshelf in Thomasville, Georgia), Annie B. Jones felt...ordinary. She watched friends leave her small town, stayed married to the same guy she met when she was 18, and sat back as people lived big lives. But instead of feeling regret, she had a realization. And she wrote a book about it! Out on April 22, Ordinary Time is all about finding the magic in the mundane and the joy in living quietly. It's a refreshing read that proves adventure isn't always best. \$27; harpercollins.com



# Good start. Great morning.

An excellent source of fiber in every bowl.



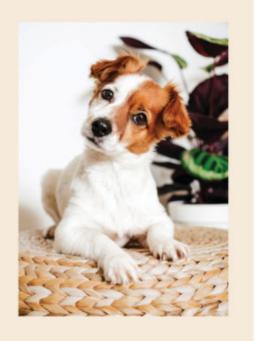




## PUPDATE

## **Talking to Dogs**

You know that low, slow voice you use with your pup? (Siiiiit. Biiiiig stretch!) There may actually be a reason for it, according to a new study. While humans normally chatter away at a speed of about four syllables per second, the researchers found that people slowed down to around three syllables per second when talking to dogs—a bit closer to the two "woofs" or "arfs" per second that doggos do. The authors suggest that our slightly slower speech may ultimately help our dogs better understand us. Who's a good human? You're a good human!



the Arthritis Foundation's Ease of Use certification.

Designed for people with conditions like chronic pain and limited mobility, the handles are chunky and easy to grip. The products (lip treatment and mascara, with more coming soon!) are made for extra-sensitive skin. From \$26; tiltbeauty.com

## Our Promise to Blue Is Our Promise to You

## What started as a simple promise to feed an Airedale named Blue

like one of the family has turned into a natural pet food company trusted by over 20 million US households. And while a lot has changed, one thing has always remained the same at Blue Buffalo — a commitment to making the best pet food possible with ingredients you'll feel good about feeding.

BlueBuffaloStory.com



Love them like family. Feed them like family.™



Some moments are made to share

Find out what to capture at VisitFrederick.org





Some of our all-time favorite little helpers to make your life so much easier BY HANNAH BAKER

## THE LAST STRAW

This amazing straw has a microfilter that traps 99.9% of microplastics, bacteria, parasites, and dirt in tap water. For each one sold, a child in need gets safe water for a school year. Lifestraw Sip, \$35 each; lifestraw.com

Photographs by Ted Cavanaugh

HBD! APRIL 2025 REAL SIMPLE 19





## **SMART LABELER**

Organize all your stuff with this pocket-size label maker that uses BPA-free thermal printing instead of ink. (No need for refills!) It's wireless, and you can print directly from your phone. D30 Portable Label Maker, \$44; phomemo.com



Pare down that mountain of lids with this universal one that fits pots and pans from 6 to 12 inches. It reduces cabinet clutter—and time spent hunting for the just-right topper. Stainless Steel Universal Lid, \$35; zwilling.com



## **HOT SPOT**

Set up this midcenturyinspired portable fireplace outside—or inside! That's right, it can be used in your living room, thanks to its cleanburning, smoke-free gel canisters. Lloyd Modern Gel Fuel Fireplace, \$700; solostove.com



## **CASE STUDY**

It's a computer stand!
And a laptop sleeve!
The two-in-one-ness
means you can
work comfortably and
commute in style.
Choose from three
sizes and colors.
Transformable Vegan
Leather Laptop Bag Set,
\$40; multitasky.com



## WHEELY SAUCERS

Why strain your back trying to pick up that extra-large plant when you could roll it around? These saucers have built-in wheels, which make vacuuming behind that giant monstera a breeze. Ecopots Saucer on Wheels, \$35 each; bloomscape.com



## **DO-IT-ALL BAG**

Schlepping groceries and laundry is waaay easier with this water-resistant rolling bag, which can hold up to 66 pounds and has three unbreakable handles. Hulken, from \$99; hulken.com





### **PLANE BUDDY**

Plug this into the TV jack on your next flight. It will connect your Bluetooth earbuds, eliminating the need to wait for the attendants to bring you a pair of (eek—disposable!) wired headphones. AirFly, from \$35; twelvesouth.com





### **PERSONAL SIREN**

Pull the pin and this device flashes brightly and beeps EXTRA LOUDLY to get the attention of people around you. Keep it on your key chain or bag so it's easily accessible in case of emergency. Birdie, \$40; shesbirdie.com



## **STEM SAVER**

Nothing kills a pretty bouquet quicker than old, gunky water. The bottom of this vase unscrews for draining; empty it out, screw it back on, and refill from the top. The Amaranth Vase, \$40; amazon.com



## **CART BLANCHE**

The ultimate yard helper, this sturdy guy functions as a wheelbarrow, dolly, bag carrier, and more. His tires never need inflating, and his smart design makes a 200-pound load feel like a 17-pound one. Aerocart 8-in-1 Yard Cart, \$250; worx.com



## **BEAUTY STATION**

Not enough surface area around your bathroom sink for all your gettingready gear? This sturdy mat fits over the basin, creating a workspace for up to two pounds of stuff. When you're done, it folds up to the size of an iPad case. The Matte, \$40; thematte.com



## **BEDDING MATES**

Before washing your sheets, clip the corners to these plastic cards. They'll keep linens from tangling and twisting in the machines and help loads dry much quicker, saving energy and time. Wad-Free for Bed Sheets, \$20 for 2; amazon.com

## FRESHIS ON THE HORIZON



Take a breath then take it all in exploring sandy shores and colorful coasts. Simply step outside, shine bright and keep it fresh in Pure Michigan.



michigan.org





## **MAGNETIC TRIVET**

No more fumbling to grab a trivet when you're holding a hot pot. This beechwood number clings to the bottom of any magnetic (e.g., cast-iron or stainless-steel) cookware hands-free. Staub Magnetic Wooden Trivet, from \$35; food52.com



## **FUR GATHERER**

Instead of sticky paper, this reusable lint roller uses static electricity to grab pet hair from furniture, rugs, and clothes. It's easy to empty and pretty cute, though not nearly as cute as your fur baby. ChomChom Roller, \$35; chewy.com



## **ARTSY TV**

Beloved by designers and REAL SIMPLE editors, this perfect-for-a-gallerywall TV displays art on a matte screen when not in use. Bonus: You can switch out the magnetic frame as your style evolves. The Frame, from \$600; samsung.com



## **PET CAMERA**

Keep tabs on your precious pup with this 360° camera. Through the app, you can watch your doggo, talk to him, toss him treats, and get real-time barking alerts wherever you are. 360° Dog Camera, \$210; furbo.com



## **POSTURE FIXER**

Designed by an orthopedic surgeon, this FDA-registered bra uses tension fabrics and panels to help improve your posture and upperbody alignment. No more slouching! Power Bra, \$189; forme.science

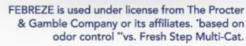


## **HANDY WARMERS**

Defrost frozen hands with this rechargeable warmer, featuring six heat settings. It can last up to nine hours per charge and doubles as a power bank for tablets and phones. HeatBank 9S Rechargeable Hand Warmer, \$50; zippo.com







# HEADSHOTS, FROM BOTTOM LEFT: JASON DONNELLY; FELIX WONG (2)

## Editor Raves 3 Things We Can't Stop Talking About



## YourDaDa Super Sticky Insect Traps

"I made the mistake of bringing one of my outdoor plants inside last fall. A serious gnat problem ensued! I used these traps in most of my houseplants and completely resolved the issue within a couple of weeks. I really appreciate that they stay sticky, even if they get a little wet when it's time to water Fernadette Peters and her friends."

—Leah Lopez Cardenas, senior special projects editor \$5 for 40; amazon.com



## Madewell Softfade Cotton Boxy-Crop Tee

"Here we have the Platonic ideal of a T-shirt. As the name implies, it's cropped—but not too much so. It's also plenty substantial and slightly stretchy. I wear it (often!) with high-waist jeans, and it hits just right, with nary a hint of midriff."—Lauren lannotti, editor in chief \$28; madewell.com



## Odistar Desktop Vacuum Cleaner

"This was a TikTok-made-me-buy-it purchase. And you know what? I'm so glad I was influenced! It's a palm-size cordless vacuum; I use it in the morning to clean up the sugar that inevitably misses my coffee cup. The process delights me." —Erica Leigh Finamore, home director \$13; amazon.com





A Sweet Treat



Invite butterflies to your garden this spring and summer with these delectable reblooming flowers on perfectly sized, compact plants.

Shop all five brilliant varieties at **ButterflyCandy.com** 

## The Books List Top Picks for Book Club & Beyond

BY KRISTYN KUSEK LEWIS

## **Mysterious Journey**

In **Heartwood** by Amity Gaige (Sea Wife), 42-year-old Valerie is nearing the finish line of her Appalachian Trail hike when she disappears in the Maine wilderness. Beverly, the law enforcement officer directing the search, grows increasingly worried as the days slip by without any clues. A few hundred miles south. Lena, a 76-year-old in a Connecticut retirement community, becomes enthralled by the case. Both a suspenseful page-turner and a poignant exploration of human connection and bravery, this powerful book is unputdownable.

## Tale of True Grit

When NBC News correspondent Vicky Nguyen was an infant in 1979, her family made a harrowing escape from Communist Vietnam across the South China Sea, where they were attacked by pirates. This scene in Boat Baby, her memoir, is so dramatic it reads like fiction. After the family resettled in America, Nguyen navigated life with spunk, optimism, and the fighting spirit she inherited from her parents. Her funny, candid, heartfelt book is a reminder that, even as we carry our pasts with us, we should keep our sights on where we want to go.

## **Historical Thriller**

The Paris Express, the latest by Emma Donoghue (Room), is a deliciously tense novel that takes place on a train barreling through France. Based on an actual 1895 disaster, the story is told through multiple points of view, including the train itself. (Trust us; it works.) At its center is Mado, a young anarchist who boarded with a homemade bomb, which she intends to use to assassinate the members of parliament on board. As readers get to know the other passengers and crew members, Mado's battle with her conscience makes for a heart-pounding ride.

## **Ancestral Saga**

Set in the mountains of western North Carolina, Happy Land by Dolen Perkins-Valdez (Take My Hand) follows Nikki, a real estate agent from D.C. who's visiting her estranged grandmother, Rita, for the first time. Nikki learns that in the 1870s, a community of freed enslaved people founded a utopian kingdom on the land Rita's house sits on. and that their ancestor Luella was its queen. Inspired by the true story of the Kingdom of the Happy Land, this mesmerizing tale shows how aspects of our history help us see ourselves in a new light.

## **Frothy Delight**

Florence Grimes is a 31-year-old party girl with a failed music career. Her only saving grace is her 10-year-old son, Dylan, who literally gets her out of bed in the morning. When her son's intolerable bully, a frozen-foods heir, goes missing during their London private school's field trip, Florence suddenly has a purpose: to find the child and clear her son's name, who may or may not have had something to do with the disappearance. **All the Other Mothers** 

Hate Me by Sarah **Harman** is nonstop entertainment, a hilarious and biting story of redemption.









Sunday brunches are the best of times. Which is why ordinary eggs just don't measure up.

Eggland's Best eggs have more of the delicious, farm-fresh, taste we love-for any meal or any time of day.

Superior nutrition, too. With 6 times more vitamin D, 10 times more vitamin E, and 25% less saturated fat than ordinary eggs.

Eggland's Best eggs. Amazing moments deserve nothing less.













2

**REPAIR SERVICE** 

This is like CPR for my hair.

damp strands to help fix

I comb a few pumps through

damage, improve the look of

split ends, and boost shine.

It's also a heat protectant.

Dove Intensive Repair 10-in-1 Serum, \$10; amazon.com



## **DOUBLE WHAMMY**

Who has time for a lash conditioner? Save a step with this two-in-one serum and mascara. It's a "tubing" formula, which means it wraps around each lash to add length and volume. Peptides and botanical extracts encourage growth. Total Lash Serum Mascara, \$59; colorescience.com





## **A TOTAL WASH**

Drunk Elephant's founder had this oatmeal-infused wash made after her hubby requested a cleanser that could double as a shaving cream. It takes off SPF and makeup without leaving my cheeks red. Mello Marula Cream Cleanser, \$36; drunkelephant.com



## **About Heather**

With more than 18 years in the beauty biz, the busy mom of two (hi, Bean and Georgie!) has tried almost every serum, balm, and potion out there. She's always down to chat about facial hair.





## HAIR CARE THAT CARES

Crush a tablet in your hand, add water, and shampoo. Not only is it better for the earth and great for travel, but the spirulina and biotin give me Disney princess hair! Daily Shampoo, \$32 for 50 tablets; bluandgreen.com







**IF YOU'RE NOT** a sour drinker, you'd be forgiven for thinking these cocktails are, well, tart—maybe unpleasantly so. But what they really are is balanced. Each one is a well-calibrated combo of spirit, citrus, and sweet. Take a sip, and puckered lips will likely not be your first reaction. It will be something like "Mmm, this is delicious! More, please!"

You'd also be forgiven for thinking that sours are a little retro. It's true they went out of fashion for a while, says Sammi Katz, coauthor of *Spirited Women: Makers, Shakers, and Trailblazers in the World of Cocktails.* "In the 1980s and '90s, bottled sour mix was the go-to," she explains. "They tended to taste fake and saccharine, and that severely damaged the reputation of these drinks." Thankfully, these days, freshly squeezed citrus is in vogue, and sours are making a comeback both in bars and at home.

The classic ratio is two parts spirit, one part citrus, one part sweetener. But as you'll see here, the proportions aren't set in stone. Play around and find your sourish sweet spot!



## **About Jenna**

REAL SIMPLE's food director and the author of five cookbooks, Jenna is an enthusiastic eater, drinker, and home cook. Her go-to cocktail is a Negroni, and her wine of choice is anything bubbly. Cheers!

## **AMARETTO SOUR**

This recipe breaks the classic sour ratio in favor of a sweeter, but not cloying, sip. For a tarter version, cut the simple syrup to 1½ tablespoons and up the lemon juice to 2 tablespoons.

Place 3 Tbsp. (1½ oz.) amaretto, 2 Tbsp. (1 oz.) simple syrup, and 1½ Tbsp. (¾ oz.) fresh lemon juice in a cocktail shaker filled with ice. Cover and shake until chilled. Strain into a rocks glass filled with ice. Garnish with an orange slice and maraschino cherry.

## **WHISKEY SOUR**

Katz reaches for bourbon when making this cocktail. "An affordable one, in the \$25 to \$35 range, works great." Shake it with an egg white to get a frothy layer on top.

Place 1/4 cup (2 oz.) whiskey, 2 Tbsp. (1 oz.) fresh lemon juice, 1 Tbsp. (1/2 oz.) simple syrup, and 1 egg white in a cocktail shaker (without ice). Cover and shake until frothy, about 20 seconds. Add ice; cover and shake until cold. Strain into a rocks glass.

## **DAIQUIRI**

That's right—it's a sour! And the classic is definitely a step up from the frozen concoctions you slurped during your last vacay. Katz suggests playing around with the kind of rum you use. "This drink is a great canvas for exploring different types."

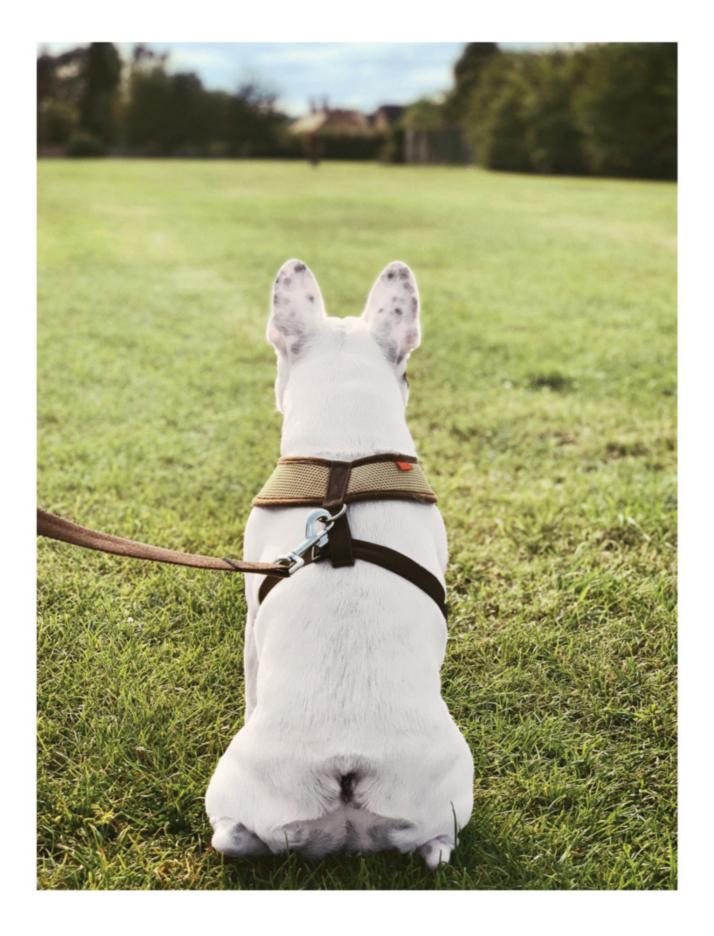
Place <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> cup (2 oz.) rum, 2 Tbsp. (1 oz.) fresh lime juice, and 1 Tbsp. (<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> oz.) simple syrup in a cocktail shaker filled with ice. Cover and shake until chilled. Strain into a chilled coupe glass. Garnish with a lime twist.

## To make simple syrup:

Boil ½ cup granulated sugar and ½ cup water in a small saucepan, stirring until sugar dissolves and liquid is clear, about 1 minute. Let cool, then refrigerate in an airtight container for up to 2 weeks.







**PETS** 

#### **WALK THIS WAY**

Take Fido for a stroll without taking a tumble. (It happens. A lot.)

BY DANA McMAHAN

when you're getting your little buddy ready for his evening walk? Potential injuries. Because he's the goodest boy, and just look at that toofy smile! But according to research from Johns Hopkins University, dog-walking-related emergency room visits (for the humans) have quadrupled in the last 20 years, with women and older adults most at risk (thanks for nothing, lower bone strength!). Pet parents get pulled too hard or trip, then suffer from sprains, fractures, and even traumatic brain injuries.

There are a few factors behind this alarming trend. For starters, walking is America's favorite exercise. Also, high-energy breeds (we're looking at you, huskies and labs!) are very popular, says Nicole Ellis, a certified professional dog trainer with Rover, a network of pet sitters and walkers. And the U.S. population is living longer, so more older folks are going out for strolls. Yet according to some research, only 8% of dog parents enroll their pups in obedience training. Consider some classes for Snarls Barkley! And in the meantime, use these tips to keep everyone's paws planted firmly on the ground.

#### **Do Some Basic Training**

You know it's coming: "Who's walking who?" It's a joke people often make when they see a rowdy pup dragging their person down the street. That pulling is a canine instinct, says Brian Collins, DVM, senior lecturer at Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine. "Dogs' ancestors were predators," he says. "They're built for chasing their prey. They don't just amble along." Being on a leash isn't natural for dogs,



he explains, so they pull to get what they want—more walking, more sniffing. When we let them, we just reinforce the behavior, and they continue to pull.

The solution? Train your dog to walk next to you and, whenever possible, to look at you—instead of, say, squirrels and other dogs. "This starts with walks in controlled environments, beginning inside your home and then a backyard," Ellis says. Reward your dog with something soft and stinky every time he makes eye contact with you. Slowly introduce him to more distracting environments (from your yard, transition to a quiet neighborhood, then a more bustling setting). When he does pull, you should stop or turn around so he has to return to you—and have a treat at the ready!

#### **Gear Up with the Right Stuff**

Even when they're small or young, dogs can be a lot stronger than us. The proper equipment can help rein in pulling tendencies. Experts agree that retractable leashes are a no-no. They give dogs more freedom to roam, and that can encourage the problematic behavior you're trying to stop. (Not to mention they're dangerous, Ellis warns. The leash can break free easily, and if you drop the whole thing, it can become a scary chunk of plastic hurling at your dog.) Instead, use a fixedlength leash of four to six feet, Ellis says. Slide your hand through the loop and hold on to the leash. "With the other hand, you can hold a spot on the leash closer to the dog," she adds. Never wrap the leash around your hand or wrist, as that's a good way to get hurt. Many experts also

recommend a harness instead of a collar to prevent damage to your dog's neck and trachea.

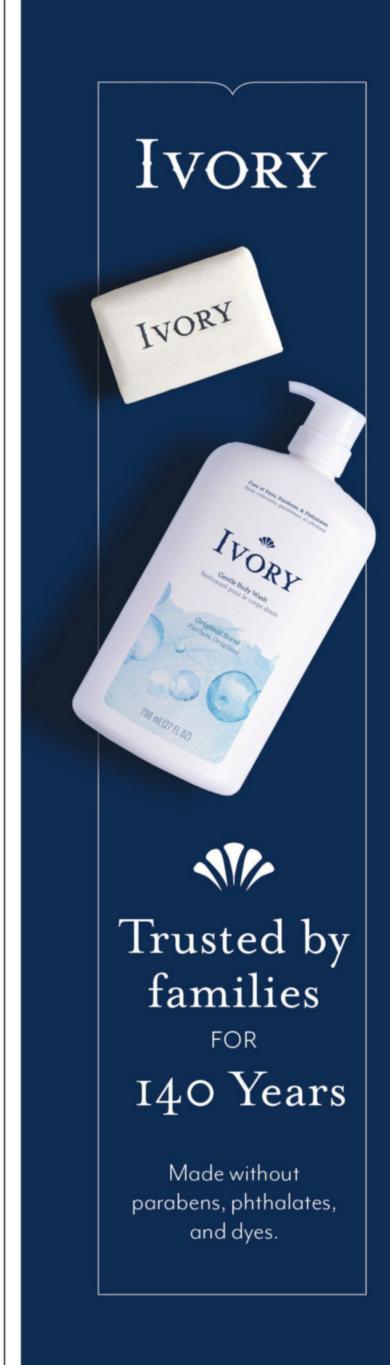
Think about what you're wearing too, says Devin Trachman, a doctor of physical therapy and the clinic director of Physical Therapy Central in Edmond, Oklahoma. Be smart about your footwear. "Please don't wear flip-flops. And make sure you have your phone with you," she says, in case something happens and you need to call for help. If you're walking at night, stick to well-lit areas, bring a flashlight, and put something reflective on both of you.

#### **Find the Best Walking Partner**

Ideally, your dog fits your lifestyle and abilities, Collins says. "If you're not that active, it's probably not a good idea to adopt a border collie," he says. "If you can easily pick up your dog, it's probably a dog you can safely walk on a leash." That doesn't mean you shouldn't get a larger dog, Collins adds, but he'll definitely need proper leash training.

And give yourself a gut check. You may be taking a literal walk in the park, but the demands on your body are real. It requires balance and core strength to quickly recover from sudden shifts in weight or direction on the other end of the leash, Trachman says. "If you're not quite there, maybe ask a friend to join you on a walk," she says. Or lean on dog-walking services.

No matter what, put your phone down and keep your eyes peeled; watch your dog's body language, look ahead for trip hazards, and stay aware of your surroundings. You never know what can happen out in the exciting world, and your number one job on these walks is to keep your pup—and yourself!—safe. ■



#### SIMPLE TWISTS

# OUR BEST-EVER NEW USES FOR OLD THINGS

We've been coming up with them since before TikTok even existed.



# Tights To Corral Gift Wrap

Because people rarely finish a roll in a single wrapping session!
Cut off a leg from an old pair of tights and slide it over the roll to keep the paper from ripping or unfurling during storage. Note:
This also works well for that rolled-up print you've been meaning to frame.



Eggshells

#### **Fertilize Soil**

Your favorite fern wants your eggshells! (They contain calcium, phosphorus, and magnesium.) The next time you make an eggy breakfast, rinse out the shells and set them aside. When they're fully dry, stash them in an airtight container until you've amassed a small collection (about 18 eggs' worth). Then grind them into a fine powder in a blender, sprinkle them on the soil around your plant, and watch it flourish.



#### USE

#### A Tennis Ball

ТО

#### Clear Up Scuff Marks

Those streaks on your floor are about to meet their match. Use a tennis ball like an eraser to scrub away the scuff. The best part: This little trick is safe on hardwood, tile, and all other kinds of flooring.



# A Penny

TO

# **Check Your Tire Treads**

Turns out, Abe Lincoln can tell you how your tires are doing. Insert a penny into a groove of your tire with his head pointing inward. If part of his noggin is covered by the ribs (the raised portions), you're good to go. If you can see his entire dome, you should get new wheels. The distance between the rim of a penny and Lincoln's head is a sixteenth of an inchthe ideal minimum tread depth.



#### USE

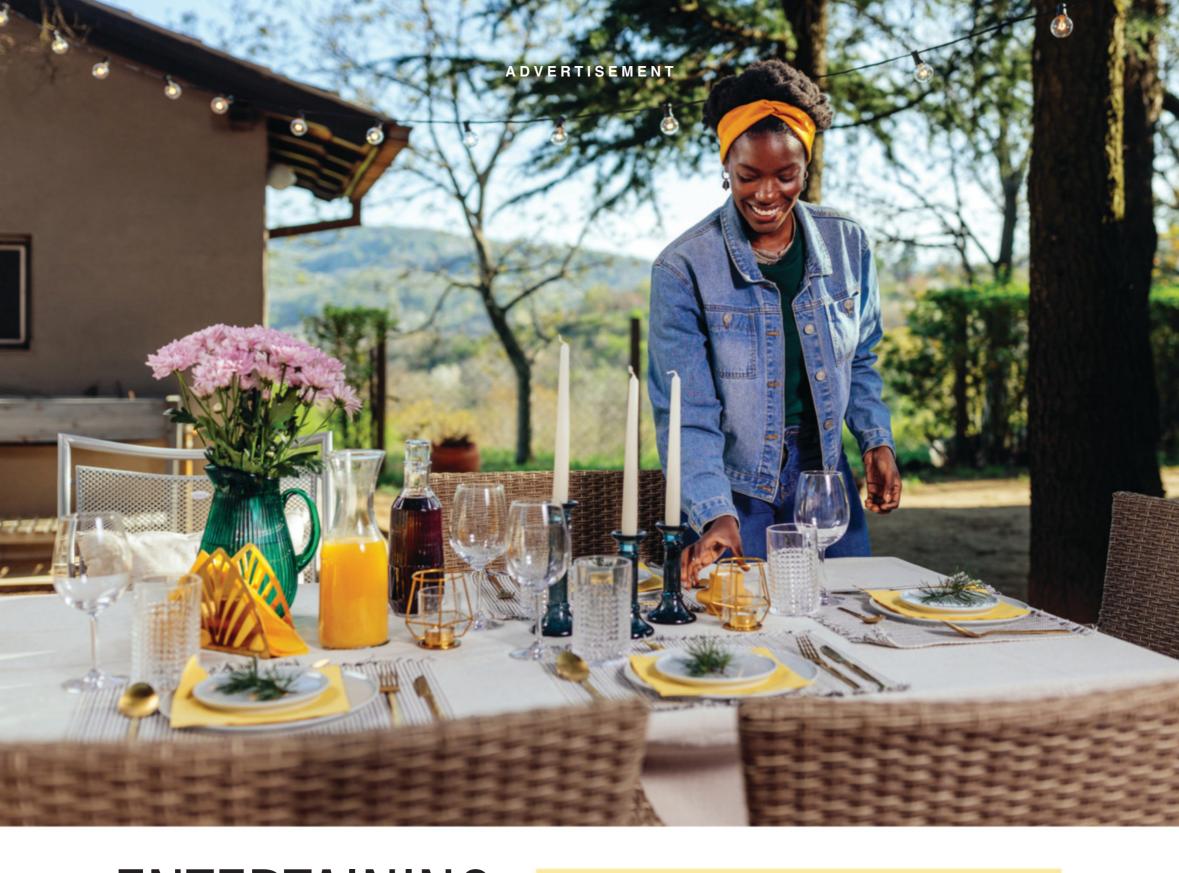
# An Empty Toilet Paper Roll

TO

#### Vacuum Tiny Crevices

For a tool that's even narrower than the crevice attachment that came with your vac, grab a cardboard toilet paper roll. Slip one end over the hose and crush the other end to fit inside, say, window frames, your car's console, or the spaces between your hardwood floorboards.





# ENTERTAINING WITH E a se

Hosting an al fresco gathering to enjoy the warm weather with friends? Consider these three tips to execute a memorable bash with minimal lift—and choose Glad to keep your festivities mess-free.

Simplify The Menu To avoid spending precious party time in the kitchen, lean into a menu that features delicious nocook nibbles you can prepare ahead of time. With so many great fruits and vegetables in season this time of year, you can get creative with recipes where fresh ingredients are the stars. Think crudités, finger sandwiches, and fruit puddings—tasty eats you can plate before the party and keep in the fridge.

# Choose Reliable Party Tools

Stock up on hosting basics that will work hard for you, like **Glad™ Heavy Duty ForceFlex Drawstring Trash Bags**. These party must-haves hold 80+ pounds of trash, are rip and tear resistant, and have advanced leak protection. Use them in bins accessible to guests to keep the party space tidy, and also when it comes time for a big cleanup sweep at the end.

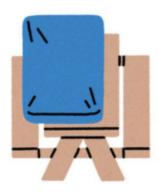
# O Plan a Seasonal Activity

Coordinating an activity for guests to enjoy at the party will go a long way in making your get-together one to remember. It will also provide a central focus and theme for your event, which will help streamline other planning details. We recommend arranging a crafty activity ideal for outdoor gatherings, like a paint and sip or a DIY flower bouquet bar.



SHOP GLAD™ HEAVY DUTY FORCEFLEX DRAWSTRING TRASH BAGS, YOUR HELPING HAND FOR SPRING AND SUMMER HOSTING. LEARN MORE AT GLAD.COM.





#### USE **A Fitted Sheet** TO

#### Cover a Picnic Table

A twin-size sheet fits nicely over most picnic tables, giving you a clean, splinterfree surface. And, yay, the elastic band will keep it from blowing around in the wind.



#### USE **A Pillowcase**

TO

#### **Dust a Ceiling Fan**

After one too many accidental dust showers, we've become big fans of this idea. Slide an old pillowcase over a fan blade. With it clamped between your hands, slowly drag it off to remove—and contain!—dust and grime. Repeat for each blade. Give the pillowcase a shake outside before washing.

USE A Paper Straw

#### Pack a Necklace

Prevent chains from becoming a knotted, jumbled mess when you're traveling. Just thread one end of a delicate necklace through a straw and clasp it closed. For extra-long chains, string together more straws; you can always cut them down to the length you need.





#### **Tension Rods**

USE

#### **File Baking Sheets**

The best way to store baking sheets: upright. Empty out a cabinet (or at least one side) and install two tension rods vertically—one near the back of the cabinet and one parallel to it, near the door. Repeat as

needed to add more sections. This way, you can file your baking sheets (and cutting boards, cooling racks, and muffin tins) side by side and simply pull out what you need. No more precarious stacks!



## **A Toothpick**

#### **Keep Packing Tape** Ready to Go

A lost or shredded edge on a roll of packing tape is something we wouldn't wish on our worst enemy. The fix is in. After each use, stick a toothpick under the loose end. The next time you reach for it, you'll be able to easily pick up where you left off.





#### **Clear Nail Polish**

#### **Rustproof Shaving Cream Cans**

Paint a thin layer of clear nail polish around the bottom of your metal shaving cream can. Why? The lacquer protects the can from water that can corrode the metal. That's one less ring in the bathtub to scrub!





## A Bobby Pin

#### **Hold a Small Nail**

Save your fingers and call in a helper! When trying to hammer a too-tiny-to-grip nail, slide it through a bobby pin. Hold the end of the clip and you'll keep your thumb at a safe distance.



Scuffed up your blue suede shoes? Gently rub an emery board across the fabric, working in the direction of the grain. This little cheat can remove stains too.





#### USE A Wine Bottle

#### **Water Plants While** You're Away

If you're going on a trip, find some time to drink a bottle of wine before you leave (you can do it!) and rinse it out. Fill the bottle with water, replace the cork, and

hammer a nail through it to create a small hole. Remove the nail and place the neck of the bottle in the soil at a slight angle. Water will slowly drip out and hydrate your plant.



#### USE

#### **Rubber Bands**

TO

#### Straighten **Wobbly Tapers**

Tilted tapers are a serious fire hazard. To straighten them out, wrap a rubber band around the base of the candle, the way you'd put a hair tie around a ponytail. This should fill the gap

between your taper and the holder (the likeliest cause of the lean) while providing some extra nonslip grip. If there's still a tilt, add another rubber band until the taper stands tall.



#### USE **A Coffee Filter**

TO

#### Clean a Mirror

Unlike paper towels or rags, a coffee filter won't tear or leave lint behind as you clear up glass or mirrors. Spritz, swipe, shine!



#### USE

#### **An Empty Tissue Box** TO

#### **Hold Plastic Bags**

It seems like every household in America has a plastic bag filled with more plastic bags. (Yes, even in 2O25.) Ditch that messy, bulky system and employ an empty tissue box. It makes for tidy, one-at-a-time dispensing and saves space.





# LEMON POPPY SEED BIRTHDAY CAKE

Food Network star Molly Yeh made us a cake! And we want it at every party from now until forever.



# Make Every Moment Meaningful With McCormick

Pure Vanilla and Pure Almond extracts add the perfect balance of sweetness and richness.



# LEMON POPPY SEED BIRTHDAY CAKE INGREDIENTS

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		Cooking spray		
	21/2	cups granulated sugar		
	1¼	cups neutral oil (such as canola)		
	8	large egg yolks		
	11/4	cups plain whole-milk Greek yogurt		
	1	cup superfine almond flour		
	2	tsp. lemon zest, plus 1/2 cup fresh juice (3-4 lemons)		
	1/4	cup poppy seeds		
	2	tsp. McCormick Pure Almond Extract		
	3¼	cups all-purpose flour		
	2	tsp. baking powder		
	11/2	tsp. kosher salt		
	1/2	tsp. baking soda		
FOR FROSTING AND DECORATION				
	8	large egg whites		
	2	cups granulated sugar		
	1/2	tsp. cream of tartar		
	1/2	tsp. kosher salt		
	1/4	cup plus 1 Tbsp. freeze-dried raspberry powder		
	1	tsp. McCormick Pure Vanilla Extract		
	1	tsp. rosewater (optional)		
	1	cup raspberry jam		
		Freeze-dried raspberry powder, fresh raspberries, fresh lemon peels, and/or chopped roasted pistachios		





SWEET THING

# LEMON POPPY SEED BIRTHDAY CAKE

Food Network star Molly Yeh made us a cake! And we want it at every party from now until forever.







# **Lemon Poppy Seed Birthday Cake**

ACTIVE TIME 1 HOUR, 15 MINUTES TOTAL TIME 3 HOURS, 15 MINUTES SERVES 12

#### Cake

Cooking spray

21/2 cups (500 g) granulated sugar

1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> cups (250 g) neutral oil (such as canola)

8 large egg yolks

1<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> cups (300 g) plain whole-milk strained (Greek-style) yogurt

1 cup (112 g) superfine blanched almond flour

2 tsp. lemon zest plus ½ cup fresh juice (from 3 or 4 lemons)

 $^{1}/_{4}$  cup (35 g) poppy seeds

2 tsp. almond extract

31/4 cups (390 g) all-purpose flour

2 tsp. baking powder

11/2 tsp. kosher salt

1/2 tsp. baking soda

#### **Frosting & Decoration**

8 large egg whites

2 cups (400 g) granulated sugar

1/2 tsp. cream of tartar

1/2 tsp. kosher salt

¹/₄ cup plus 1Tbsp. freeze-dried raspberry powder (see Note)

1 tsp. pure vanilla extract

1 tsp. rosewater (optional)

1 cup raspberry jam, divided Freeze-dried raspberry powder, fresh raspberries, fresh lemon peels, and/or chopped roasted pistachios

MAKE THE CAKE: Preheat oven to 350°F. Spray 3 (8-inch) round cake pans with cooking spray and line bottoms with parchment paper. (If you don't have 3 cake pans, bake in batches.)

**WHISK** sugar and oil in a large mixing bowl. Whisk in egg yolks, then yogurt, almond flour, lemon zest, lemon juice, poppy seeds, and almond extract.

**SPRINKLE** all-purpose flour, baking powder, salt, and baking soda over top of batter.

Give dry ingredients a rough little whisk before stirring into batter. Whisk until just combined. Divide among prepared pans.

**BAKE** until tops are golden and a wooden pick inserted in centers comes out clean, 30 to 35 minutes. Let cool in pans for 10 minutes. Remove from pans; discard parchment and transfer cakes to wire racks to cool completely, about 30 minutes. (Cakes may be wrapped in plastic or stored in airtight containers at room temperature for up to 2 days.)

**MAKE THE FROSTING:** Combine egg whites, sugar, cream of tartar, and salt in a double boiler or large heatproof bowl set over (but not in) a pot of simmering water. Heat over medium, whisking constantly, until an instant-read or candy thermometer reads 175°F, 8 to 10 minutes. (Mixture will be thin and frothy.) Using an electric mixer or a stand mixer with whisk attachment, beat on high speed until stiff and glossy, about 3 minutes. Add freeze-dried raspberry powder, vanilla, and (if using) rosewater. Beat on low speed until just combined.

**ASSEMBLE THE CAKE:** Place 1 cake layer on a cake stand or serving platter; top with  $^{1}/_{2}$  cup jam. Spread in an even layer, leaving a  $^{1}/_{2}$ -inch border around edge of cake. Top with another cake layer and repeat with remaining  $^{1}/_{2}$  cup jam. Top with third cake layer. Cover whole cake with frosting. Refrigerate, uncovered, until frosting is set, about 1 hour.

raspberry powder, fresh raspberries, fresh lemon peels, and/or chopped pistachios. Serve immediately or refrigerate, loosely covered, for up to 8 hours. Bring to room temperature for 15 minutes before serving.

**NOTE:** To make raspberry powder, grind freeze-dried raspberries in a blender. Strain through a sieve; discard seeds and larger pieces. If you can't find freeze-dried raspberries, swirl a few tablespoons of raspberry jam into the frosting instead.



#### MORE FROM MOLLY

Her new book, Sweet Farm!, features unique recipes for cookies, bars, cakes, and Midwestern-inspired "sweet salads." Molly says she's fluent in sugar, and honestly, she's speaking our language. \$33; harpercollins.com

# Nook

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# To the landlord who caught me when I fell

After a terrible breakup, Tiffany Midge found a host who became so much more.

Dear Lynn,

Every morning that first year in my new life, my thoughts upon waking were so clear and direct they sometimes startled me: Thank you for this warm bed with the comforter as fluffy as the Stay Puft Marshmallow Man. Thank you for the covered porch with the wicker furniture, and the plants, trees, and garden you keep looking so abundant. Thank you, Lynn, for your generosity and friendship, the walks, the trips to Costco, the backyard suppers with friends and family, even the treks to the stables to shovel horse manure.

Speaking of horsesh\*t, the breakup had been brutal. Nothing made any sense. A decade of living together resulted in being told to pack up and leave within a couple of weeks. A discard. I had very few options and little support, and I felt crushed beneath the weight of heartache and grief. I was set to move out of state, to



stay on my sister's couch and live out of my suitcase.

Lacking the strength to immediately uproot myself and leave town, I was so relieved when a mutual friend suggested I rent your attached apartment. I quickly settled in and realized it was the first time in a long while that I'd felt relaxed. Your place was a sanctuary, a safe space to understand where I'd been and how I'd gotten there.

When I think of my stay with you, I recall the summers I spent at my grandmother's house as a girl. That time was also a respite for me, somewhere safe, away from my parents' unhappiness. You remind me of my grandmother. You were both raised in Montana, and she was irreverent, ferocious, and deeply kind in the same ways you are. I remember she had a porch swing beneath giant chestnut trees. It was where we kicked off our shoes, laughed, and commiserated. When I moved into your rental, you said, "Women need to look out for each other," and you meant it. Because when the world treats us roughly and promises are broken, we need someone to leave a porch light on for us—or rather, a string of twinkly ones.



# To my science-fiction-loving sister I miss every day

Time travel is real to Essie Chambers, and every wormhole leads to the same person.

Dear Christine,

This morning in some parallel universe, we're having a bagel on your favorite bench in Brooklyn, and your doggy daughter Bailey is curled up in your lap. I'm showing you the video of Mom doing a new TikTok dance that our niece Ava taught her, and you say something that makes it 1,000 times funnier. Then time folds in half; the end and the beginning of your life touch. Now you are 5, a blond blur tearing through the front yard, so striking that strangers in cars slow down to watch you as they pass. Our brother John is giving you a piggyback ride, and I am bossing around the both of you, my right as your big sister.

Time jumps again, and you are running around New York City in heels and pencil skirts, otherworldly gorgeous. Your angsty teen poetry has evolved into audacious, exquisitely crafted stories no one else is telling; you are a playwright with a camera around your neck, on your way to becoming a renowned portrait photographer, documenter of the aughts Black theater renaissance. And you're still my little sister, I like to remind you. But I am heartbroken over a boyfriend (you never liked him), and I let myself lay my head in your lap and cry. You stroke my hair and kiss my face and joke that we both have the same giant alien skulls. You tell me all the reasons I deserve more and better. We watch Battlestar Galactica and Star Trek (the remakes) and you explain the ways of the Trekkie. You show me a portal to anywhere, everywhere. Now we are friends.

Another time jump, and I'm with everyone who has ever loved you, from every single year of your too-short life, and we're singing to you. This is where you'll find me today, missing you and running through time and space, just like you taught me, just like we said we'd do. I love you, buddy.



#### To my ride-or-die college crew

In the friend group from J. Courtney Sullivan's university years, everyone (still) plays a role.

Dear college friends,

Twenty-five years after living together, the four of us are far-flung now. We see each other mostly one-on-one, when it just happens to happen. When Laura's work as an attorney takes her from Texas to Wisconsin, where Aliya lives; when I'm on a book tour near Karin's house in Brooklyn; when Laura vacations in Maine with her kids, and I drive up from Boston with my kids to see them. And every year or two, when we meet for a long weekend away. No husbands, no children. Just us.

Karin, you plan the trips. You find a nice hotel with a spa, and a fabulous restaurant for every night we'll be there. You book the room and the massages and the 6 p.m. dinners over which we catch up on all the details of life not covered in the daily group text. Aliya, you get a rental car using your Costco discount. You drive us around, tell us when we must leave to make it to every place five minutes early, and keep track of all flight arrivals and departures.

We are four eldest daughters, four middle-aged mothers of young children, all with demanding careers. We are organized to the extent that we must be to survive. Which in my case translates to just barely holding it together most of the time. But Karin and Aliya,



you excel at managing details. You even claim to enjoy it. You both have apps on your phones to help optimize various aspects of life, whereas I have very few apps because I can never remember my Apple password. You both keep extensive daily paper planners with additional inserts, while I write to-do lists on Post-it notes, which I inevitably lose and later find in a coat pocket or stuck to the bottom of a child's rain boot. You listen to planner podcasts (I still can't believe those are a thing).

As I write this, we are relaxing poolside in Scottsdale, Arizona. Karin and Aliya, you created a spreadsheet for this trip months ago, making a column for every day and a line for every hour, complete with entries instructing us to "relax poolside." You once referenced this document in the group text, and Laura side texted me: "Do we have access to the spreadsheet?" "Probably not," I wrote.

And thank goodness for that. On our girls trips, we all know our place. Every dinner Karin booked will be followed by Dateline and snacks in bed, which Laura will have ordered online to accommodate everyone's tastes without having to ask what they are. I will contribute nothing concrete and no one will hold this against me, maybe in part because I will be the one to notice and point out the breathtaking sunset, the mountain views, the juicy conversation unfolding at the next table, the woman in the Bluey sweatsuit with a black eye tattooed on her face. And I overflow with gratitude for the work my friends put in. I applaud every choice you make, because at home, I'm the one making all the choices. Not having to do so is the greatest gift I can imagine.





# To the mean girl who became my rock

She once teased Tara Cox to the point of tears. Now she's poised to be the executor of her will.

Dear Marissa,

When we were 5 years old, you pushed me into a bush on the play-ground during recess. The fall ripped a hole in my tights, but I didn't cry until I got home and told my mom, who dubbed you Mean Marissa.

You continued to live up to the name, but you were a classmate and a neighborhood kid, so avoiding you was impossible. When I got on the school bus in the mornings, you'd tell me that my dad, who'd waited with me, looked more like a grandfather with his thin gray hair, a declaration that would once again make me cry (but again, only when I got home). Still, you became a mainstay in my Gen X youth, a part of our small world where everyone in the housing development would stay outside and play hide-and-seek until the streetlights went on.

Over time, proximity bred friendship. In junior high, we'd convene each morning at the bus stop, sneaking cigarettes with the other kids and discussing important gossip, including who secretly took sips of Manischewitz at the most recent bar or bat mitzvah. (Us. It was us.) At 14, along with another friend, we crushed on the

same boy. He tried to play us all—but we figured him out, and the friend-ships prevailed.

By high school, we were in different cliques, me an alterna-freak and you more "heavy-metal dirtbag" adjacent. Those groups overlapped, so by the strict rules of the high school social order we were still allowed to be friends. You got your license before the rest of us, making you designated driver for our weekend outings to Woody's, a seedy local bar.

In our early 20s, you were the first of our friends to marry and have a kid. You moved farther from the city while I moved into it. We were both focused on our careers, but you had a husband, a young child, and an excruciatingly long commute, so it was nearly impossible for you to meet up. In our 30s, as your marriage and my long-term relationship dissolved, our friendship deepened, and we got closer with some other gals from the neighborhood. When middle age crept up, we started to joke that we'd all move in together and form a Golden Girls commune.

Life got hard for me in my late 40s as dementia overtook my mother, my father slowed down, and an emotional gap between my older brother and me widened. Marissa, you were there to listen and help as I came to terms with the shift from a family life filled with love, laughs, and support to what felt like a tumbleweed-filled ghost town.

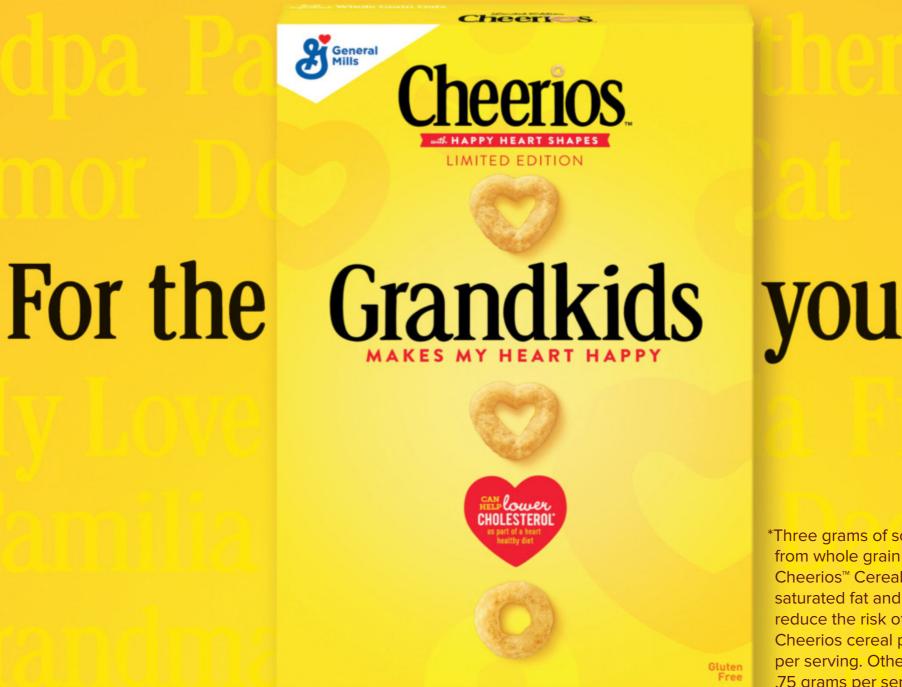
Over dinner one night, while I was venting about paperwork, proxies, and powers of attorney, you said to me, "You know I'd be happy to be your person for all that."

"But you have a kid! And a wife!" I exclaimed.

"Yeah, but I'm responsible," you replied. "And I care about you. I'd be happy to be there for you."

And for the first time in 40-odd years, Mean Marissa, you made me cry.







\*Three grams of soluble fiber daily from whole grain oat foods, like Cheerios™ Cereal, in a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol, may reduce the risk of heart disease. Cheerios cereal provides 1.5 grams per serving. Other flavors provide .75 grams per serving.

And for the friends you and the daughter you and everyone else you



Good Morning



#### To my girl who's always gotten it

At just 16 years old, Naomi Barr's childhood pal knew what was in store for them.

Dear Charlotta,

When I turned 16, you gave me a T-shirt (which I still have) with a Roy Lichtensteinstyle drawing on it, a woman holding her head, tears welling, and a thought bubble that reads, "I can't believe it. I forgot to have children!" You bought it in Manhattan, 2½ hours from our small town upstate. As I unwrapped it, you said, "This is going to be us someday." I laughed but knew what you meant. We reveled in the idea that we were different from our peers and couldn't wait for the day we would escape our dull suburb. Because we knew, even at 16, that we weren't going to lead conventional lives. We didn't want to. We had aspirations. There were big things we wanted to accomplish: colleges to go to, countries to backpack through, cities to live in, careers to build (you as an artist, me an actor). And those things, we figured, would take priority over being someone's life partner or mother, at least until we were old. You know, like, 35.

And so that's what we did. We went away to college, graduated, lived in a house together in San Francisco, traveled, dated cute men with wounded souls, and finally found our way to New York City. Here, I watched you blossom. We attended gallery shows (for you) and play openings (for me). There were dinner parties, drinks out, and long, deep conversations about politics and art. We laughed a lot and cried probably too much, mostly over feelings of failure in our relationships and careers. And then, as if that T-shirt told a prophecy, we both remembered to try for children around the time we turned 40. While it wasn't meant to be for me, I think you'd agree that with your son Alec's birth, your world became complete.

Our lives have taken other unexpected turns: While you kept at your art, I shifted from acting to writing, a craft my 16-year-old self hadn't a clue I could do well, let alone turn into a profession. There have been major losses—my mom, your mom, your sister, dear friends. We haven't always seen eye to eye, but our friendship never wavered. Friendship. Somehow that word doesn't seem big enough to describe what we have. When you've known someone this long, your relationship inhabits a precious, other space, built out of the DNA of thousands of life moments. Actually, there is a word for it: love.

#### To the smart friend who taught me patience

Feeling undervalued by her boyfriend, Eleni Gage vented to her BFF and got some surprising advice.

Dear Ami,

Since we became fast friends at freshman orientation more than 30 years ago-and roommates for the remaining three years of college—you've seen me with every serious boyfriend I've ever had. You were empathetic through every breakup and gave me great advice, as I tried to do for you.

But by the time we were in our early 30s, you had a distinct advantage on the advice-giving front: You'd become a certified psychiatrist, and I was (and still am) just a journalist. When I called you one night, standing under an awning on the way to my then boyfriend's house, I thought I knew what you'd tell me. He and I had been dating for six blissful weeks. I took a trip, and when I got back, he told me he didn't want to break up but did want to slow things down. He explained that he had gotten out of a serious relationship with a live-in girlfriend six months ago, and recognized that he had a pattern of diving into relationships, lingering in them for too long, then ending things. Because of





all that, he had promised himself he'd try being single for at least a year.

Why hadn't he mentioned this earlier? "Well," he said, "back then we were just dating. Now it's serious."

"I'm going to tell him it's over,"
I fumed. "I can't do this halfway."
I thought you'd tell me what all my other girlfriends did, what I would have said if you'd been the one in this situation: If he can't see how amazing you are, kick him to the curb!

Instead, you said, "If you can't tolerate the situation, tell him that. But you never get excited about anyone you date, you seem to really like this guy, and what he's describing has nothing to do with you and everything to do with him. I think you should create what therapists call a holding environment, a safe space where he can work this out for himself."

I didn't know if I could do what I insisted on calling a holding "pattern," but I said I'd think about it on my walk over to his place. And what I came up with was this: Yes, rather than offering an ultimatum, I could be patient and empathetic, agreeing to downshift the intensity of our relationship. Instead of seeing each other every night, we'd just date casually. I gave him the space he needed to get comfortable with me as a real live person, not what I looked like in the abstract: another serious relationship that might end like the others. A month later, he was my boyfriend again. Ten months into our relationship, he proposed. Fourteen years later, I have a husband and a family I love, thanks to you. And now that we have a teenager, the concept of a "holding environment" has come in very, very handy.

#### To the neighbor I got to know

#### Rory Evans formed a lasting friendship with the girl next door.

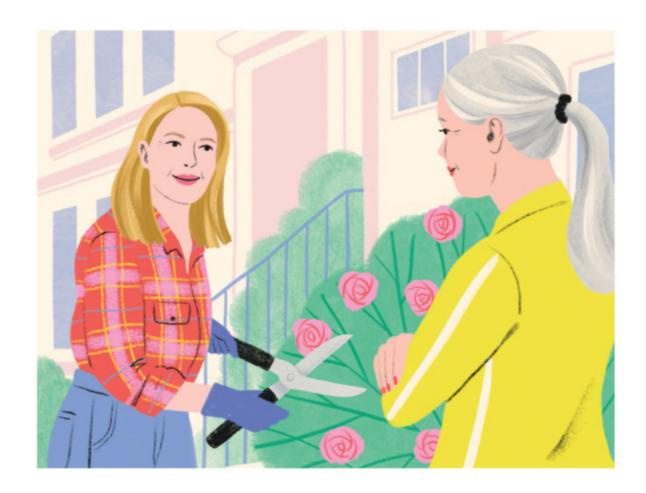
Dear Katrina,

Having a neighbor friend always struck me as so desirable. It captured the magic of a Richard Scarry illustration: some rosy-cheeked cat standing at her kitchen window chatting with a sparkly-eyed bunny picking carrots in her garden next door. I wanted what that cat and bunny have!

Then we bought our current home. It was a fixer-upper with an overgrown backyard and dilapidated fence. I spent a lot of time taming the yard. Weekend after weekend, I would see you, my next-door neighbor, leave to go exercise or run errands, and I would still be snipping away at an unruly rosebush when you returned. I remember being so worried that you thought I was ruining the garden that I struck up conversations with you as a form of apology.

Slowly, slowly, we started chatting for longer and longer, me in my bulky work gloves and you in your cool running T-shirts. You are a nurse and an artist and a mother to children who are 12 years older than my daughter—and the exact kind of wise, creative, and helpful soul everyone would be lucky to find living next door. Soon enough, we'd stand there for an hour or more.

The final bit of our renovation, more than three years later, was addressing that fence and its missing planks of wood. But wouldn't that stifle our easy chat access? My husband arrived at the idea of placing a little window in the new fence. We use it to continue our unending conversations. We borrow ketchup and pass off baked goods. Sometimes my husband and I chat with you and your husband, and it feels like *American Gothic* meets *American Gothic* (minus a pitchfork and a dour expression or two). And when I stand in my vegetable garden and look through the portal, I can sometimes see you in your kitchen—the rosy-cheeked cat to my sparkly-eyed bunny.





### To the family I made online

A bunch of blogs connected Maya Kukes to her people.

Dear DS Mamas,

When I published my very first blog post early one morning in 2008, I had no idea it would lead me to you, some of the best friends I'd never meet. I was a 35-year-old mom of two—a 3-year-old boy with Down syndrome (DS) and a "typical" 9-month-old girl. When my son was born, surprising us all with his delivery room diagnosis, there was no social media to instantly connect me to others with similar experiences. I spent much of my maternity leave scouring the internet, Googling things like "When do babies with Down syndrome walk and talk?" Among the sites, I stumbled upon a handful of online journals by moms of babies and young kids with DS and other disabilities. I'd been looking for parents like me, with a child like mine. I hadn't realized they lived in my computer.

Starting a "mommy blog" was a no-brainer for me, a lifelong journal keeper and scrapbooker. But it took me about a year of reading other people's blogs to work up the nerve to launch my own. In my introductory post, in which I shared my kids' first names and ages and cryptically stated that I lived near a "big East Coast city," I wrote that I'd been inspired to create a blog because of some of the great ones I'd discovered.

You, Cate, the author of one of my favorites, were the first to comment. "Hi! I'm so glad to see you did it," you wrote. "I look forward to reading much more. Oh, also—your kids have great names." I had devoured your blog in a handful of sittings when I found it, instantly connecting with your biting wit. One encouraging comment (from an actual reader!) was all I needed.

Soon my day was not complete without writing a post, and if I was lucky, I'd get a response or two, from someone other than my dad. You all-Cate, Amy, Megan, and Chrystal, the authors of the blogs I was reading were the ones who tended to post those responses. Before long, we were having full-blown conversations with each other, via our blogs. Our words were heavy sometimes; we discussed grief, how some of us mourned the baby we thought we would be having. But gradually topics included things like why our "typical" babies were such terrible sleepers, and what our favorite Trader Joe's snacks were. We connected over the fact that three of us had lost our moms rather young. We discovered we could type things we likely wouldn't have been able to say in person.

Most of us kept those blogs for several years. Our audiences were never huge; none of us ever went "viral." We didn't aim for popularity. For us it was about community and connection, having a safe space to vent to people who understood. Some of us went on to have more children, which provided additional material. But universally, as our kids grew older, the entries slowed. Writing about tweens and teens with disabilities was more complicated. Then social media took over, and blogging seemed downright cumbersome in comparison.

But do you remember the day one of us fired up a group text? The blogs had been quiet for some time, but there was an urgent question about a school placement, and Megan needed input. That was all it took. After what seemed like two straight days of conversation, I named it "DS Mamas" in my Contacts, and now you all live in my pocket. And I can talk to you anytime I want. I'll always be glad I kept that blog as a keepsake to early motherhood, but I'm even more grateful for how it led me to all of you.







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#### Modern Manners Advice for Your Social Dilemmas



THE DILEMMA

Rebecca asked former Modern Manners columnist Michelle Buteau for help with a friend who was always ordering food for the table—without waiting for or consulting her dinner companions. The orderer had good-enough intentions, but her excitement left everyone having to split a bill for food they didn't want.

**THE ADVICE** Michelle wisely suggested that Rebecca check out the menu beforehand and say something like "I love these two dishes. Please get them for me," or even a to-the-point "Hey, could you just wait for me?"

**THE FOLLOW-UP** "The advice was great," Rebecca says, adding that it empowered her to tell her friend, during their next dinner out, that she didn't want a specific dish. "Getting validation from the column helped. And I have used the advice with other groups as well—having more of a discussion before just letting people order because I feel bad about saying no, and then being resentful later." If there's one thing that comes up again and again in this column, it's the fact that speaking up, respectfully, is always the way to go!

#### THE DILEMMA

Beth's across-the-street neighbors installed a floodlight instead of a porch light. They leave it on pretty much all the time, and it shines directly into her house. She asked Michelle how best to handle this.

**THE ADVICE** Michelle's response was simple: "Bring a basket of something delicious. Introduce yourself, compliment their home, then get to the floodlight." She said to explain that the light makes it hard to sleep at night (even with blackout curtains) and to suggest a motion sensor, reminding Beth that "you attract more flies with honey than vinegar."



#### HAVE AN ETIQUETTE QUESTION?

Hover your phone's camera here to submit your question for Jenna and a friend, or email them at modernmanners@realsimple.com.

THE FOLLOW-UP "I know this isn't going to go over well, but I didn't take the advice, and I did absolutely nothing about the situation," Beth says. The light is still a maddening issue, and while it's never good to suffer in silence and stew, Beth says it was more important to her to keep the peace. Ultimately, she didn't want to risk rocking the neighborhood boat.

#### THE DILEMMA

With a baby on the way, Caitlin asked longtime Modern Manners columnist Catherine Newman how to deal with her in-laws and their terrible driving. "I'm frightened to get in a car with them, let alone allow them to take my baby places," she wrote. Caitlin wanted to know how she could accept the grandparents' offer to help, but with a no-driving caveat.

THE ADVICE The ever-thoughtful Catherine proposed transparency—with a little white lie. She suggested a line like "I'm thrilled that you two want to be so involved in the baby's life, but I don't feel comfortable with other people driving our child around."

THE FOLLOW-UP "We weren't able to fully go that route, as my own parents were critically helpful with babysitting and transportation," Caitlin says. "We were fortunate that it didn't end up being a huge issue." It's been 10 years, and Caitlin has a new strategy for including but not offending her mother-in-law: "She will meet us at our son's hockey games, but we have never asked her to take him to one."

"I didn't take the advice, and I did absolutely nothing about the situation."

#### THE DILEMMA

An anonymous mom wrote to Hoda Kotb and Jenna Bush Hager wondering how to talk to her kids about some bad gifts from relatives. "Bad" meaning "used." As in coloring books with pages scribbled in, and used toys with missing pieces. "My kids are hurt and insulted by this, thinking they aren't worthy of receiving something nicer," she lamented.

**THE ADVICE** Always fair and reasonable, Jenna and Hoda pointed out that some people are just not great gift givers. They also pointed out that the gift you're given does not determine your worth and suggested a little reframe—think of these as hand-me-downs, not gifts. "And take a hand-me-down for what it's worth," Hoda said.

THE FOLLOW-UP The advice seeker says this shift in mindset has helped. "I've also tried to explain to my kids that sometimes a used item can be a good gift." (It's less wasteful! The item has been extra loved!) Of course, that's not always the case, she says, like when it's a book with ripped-out pages. "I encourage them to be polite when receiving any gift and then decide later what to do with it. I have, on occasion, ordered a new replacement of something they got that's used or broken so they could enjoy it fully."

#### THE DILEMMA

Katherine moved to a new area from the other side of the country, and she was tired of being mocked by a woman in her book club anytime she mispronounced the name of a local town. "I'm gracious in the moment and shrug it off," she wrote. "But it truly does hurt my feelings and seems rude of her to laugh." Katherine asked Jenna and Hoda what she should do.

**THE ADVICE** "Sometimes people make jokes not knowing they're pushing a button," Jenna said. Hoda advised pulling the woman aside to let her know that the jokes hurt. "Once you tell someone it's your sensitive spot, that helps. We all have one," Hoda added.

THE FOLLOW-UP "I truly appreciate Hoda's and Jenna's thoughts," Katherine says. "But I do think it minimizes the fact that what this book club member is doing is objectively rude and would likely bother most people." While we certainly hear Katherine's point, we know that when trying to come to a resolution (rather than vent your anger), saying "You're being rude" is far less effective than saying "I feel hurt when you do that."

Current Modern Manners
Maven Jenna Bush Hager &
Her Pal Savannah Guthrie
on the Best & Worst Etiquette
Advice They've Heard

#### **THE BEST**

JBH: Be a good listener. If you're going to a dinner party, don't be thinking about what you're going say. Be curious about who's sitting next to you.

#### THE WORST

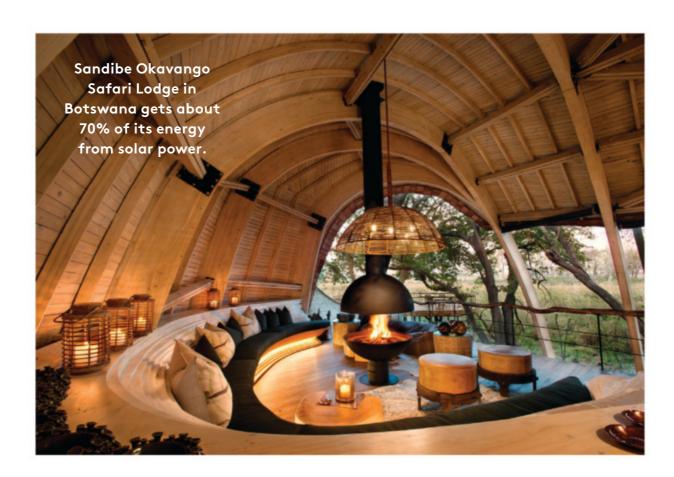
**sg:** No elbows on the table. This isn't *Downton Abbey.* Lean in to hear the people you're with, and put your elbows on the table!



HOW DO YOU DEFINE sustainable travel in 2025? It's complicated. In a nutshell, it comes down to respecting the environment and the local culture and economy. The idea of altruism in tourism has historically been pretty niche, a nice add-on for a certain type of traveler (often accompanied by a price markup). Lately, though, it's become a must for many Americans. A 2024 report from Washington State University found that 75% of U.S. adults consider sustainability a priority when traveling. And not a moment too soon: As cities across Europe buckle under the weight of overtourism, and as in-demand destinations grapple with climate change's effects on their environment and tourism revenue, the question of how and where to travel ethically has never been more important, says Jessica Blotter, cofounder of Kind Traveler, an online platform focusing on responsible travel. "Sustainable travel is about enjoying beautiful locations and ensuring they thrive for generations."

Planning a sustainable trip starts at the very beginning of the process. Any air travel will account for a huge slice of your trip's environmental impact, says Megan Epler Wood, managing director of the Sustainable Tourism Asset Management Program at Cornell University. "One round-trip flight to Europe from the U.S. equals the average American's carbon footprint for the year," she says. Still, sometimes you've gotta hit the skies, so be mindful of your cumulative effect. In general, taking only one long flight a year is better than going on multiple short flights frequently, Blotter says.

As for where to go, do some research before choosing, says Chris Imbsen, vice president of sustainability and research at the World Travel & Tourism Council. Some destinations are



officially certified as eco-friendly. To find them, Imbsen suggests checking with the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), which works with third-party organizations to vet locations according to criteria like sustainable management, land use, and cultural impact. Go to gstcouncil.org/ certified-sustainable-destinations for a searchable map. No certification for your dream locale? That doesn't mean it isn't eco-friendly. See what the tourism board's website says about the area's sustainability efforts.

Next up: lodging! While there are various green certifications for hotels like LEED and Green Key-Wood recommends looking for the B Corp seal. "A B Corp certification generally means the company has met larger

social and environmental goals," she says. You can search the site (bcorporation.net) for accommodations. If there's a spot you're eyeing, your best bet is to go straight to the hotel's website. "If they're serious about their sustainability efforts, they will make that information readily available," Imbsen says. Court Whelan, chief sustainability officer for Natural Habitat Adventures, a travel partner with World Wildlife Fund, also advises calling the hotel with questions. "I often suggest that travelers ask the hotel's general manager simple things, like 'What's your position on sustainability?,' which not only helps you put your money in the right places but also helps show the industry that sustainability is important," he says.

A 2024 report found that 75% of Americans consider sustainability a priority when traveling.

To get you started, we've planned a few sustainably minded trips for you. Pick one and pack your principles!

#### Jekyll Island, Georgia

Home to more than 1,000 acres of maritime forest, as well as Georgia's only sea turtle rehabilitation hospital, Jekyll Island is a paradise for humans and reptiles alike. From May until about late July, you can participate in conservation efforts via ranger-led turtle walks on the beach. Also check out the island's famous Driftwood Beach and the nearby Jekyll Island Campground, a serene place to pitch a tent or park an RV. For something less portable, there's the Lodge on Little St. Simons Island (from \$550 a night; littlestsimonsisland.com). It's a 45-minute drive from the turtles but offers adorable historic cottages and a nearby coastal conservation center.

#### **Asheville, North Carolina**

Sustainable travel can also mean supporting communities in need. As they rebuild from last year's devastating hurricane, Asheville and surrounding areas are hoping for tourists to come back. Book a stay at the Foundry Hotel (from \$209 a night; foundryasheville .com), a restored former steel factory in the center of the city's historically Black business district, the Block. Spend an afternoon at the nearby 50-acre Montgomery Sky Farm, which focuses on animal rescue and rehabilitation as well as heirloom produce.



#### The Azores, Portugal

Off the coast of Portugal, the Azores was the first island archipelago to snag international certification from GSTC. A more eco-friendly alternative to overtouristed destinations like Barcelona and Athens, the islands earned this distinction through their investment in renewable energy and conservation efforts on land and sea. Consider Intrepid Travel's "Highlights of the Azores" guided group trip (from \$2,097 per person; intrepidtravel.com), which includes accommodations and gets you access to volcanic hikes and tea and pineapple plantations—all while keeping your carbon footprint in check. Alternatively, check into the Solar Branco Eco Estate (from about \$105 a night: solarbranco.com), which is committed to zero food waste.

#### Okavango Delta, Botswana

Located in northern Botswana, bordering the Moremi Game Reserve, the 55,600-acre Sandibe Okavango Safari Lodge follows rigorous water and waste management practices.

Guests stay in wooden suites (from \$1,850 per person a night; andbeyond .com) and can explore the area and go on safaris by foot or truck. The property is owned by and Beyond, a sustainable luxury travel company with lodges and tented camps throughout the world.

#### **Northwestern Montana**

When you pay money to visit a national park, you're contributing much-needed funds for conservation and maintenance efforts and adding to the income of the community. Plan a trip to Glacier National Park, which is certified as an International Dark Sky Park (meaning it's one of the best places on earth to stargaze). If camping's not your jam, glamp it up at Under Canvas (from \$199 a night; under canvas.com), a resort with tent suites that's committed to minimizing light pollution, conserving water, and using solar power. No need to BYO flint! ■







# Quality time just got more rewarding

Earn unlimited 3% cash back at grocery stores, on dining, entertainment and popular streaming services with Savor.



#### **NERDING OUT**

#### **MAGAZINES**

# Learn all about this very thing you're reading right now!

BY JENNY BROWN

page. See the month and page number at the bottom? That's called a folio. The inside margin, where this page meets the opposite one, is the gutter. And the space between lines is known as leading (rhymes with "heading"), which refers to the old-timey practice of inserting lead strips between lines of text during the printing process. We use lingo from the early days of printing because magazines go back centu-

ries. They arose in Europe in the 1660s, about 60 years after the first printed newspapers, and were initially very scholarly; a German theologian is credited with creating the first one, a series of philosophical musings titled *Edifying Monthly Discussions*. Soon people started making more lighthearted versions, and as literacy spread, so did the popularity of the medium. Read on for more about its storied past (and present).

#### **DEFINING THE GENRE**

By 1731, even though at least a dozen magazines had been founded in Europe and Britain—some literary, some gossipy—the new medium didn't have a name. Then the London printer Edward Cave came out with The Gentleman's Magazine, the first to use the "m" word. Cave was riffing on the common meaning at the time, "storehouse" (from the Arabic makhazin), to describe his monthly mix of news, recipes, advice, and riddles. In line with the storehouse idea, he released an index of contents every year, likely hoping readers would hold on to their issues like a collection and keep dipping back in.

#### **AN AMERICAN BOOM**

Benjamin Franklin, who'd already been publishing his yearly *Poor Richard's Almanack*, almost got the honor of launching the first magazine in the colonies, but his 1741 *General Magazine* came out three days after a rival printer's. Both contained news, essays, poetry, and puzzles—and both failed within months. The 19th century is when American magazines really took off, thanks to cheaper printing and postage and a bigger population of readers. Some of the ones founded in this era—*National Geographic, Scientific American*, Vogue—are still around.

#### THE EVERLASTING MEDIUM

Even in the digital age, more than three magazines are sold *every* second at newsstands in the United States and Canada. After all, people love paper. According to recent market research by the firm MRI-Simmons, 67% of magazine readers are drawn to the "touch and feel" of print. Most magazines, including this one, are recyclable, by the way—but amazingly, MRI-Simmons found that 30% of readers stock away their issues forever! Just as Edward Caye would have wanted.



# simple extras

A LITTLE SOMETHING EXTRA JUST FOR YOU



#### **GREAT TASTE COMES NATURALLY**

BLUE Tastefuls is so tasty, we could only call it one thing. Cats love the great taste from real meat and natural ingredients. Available in dry and wet recipes.

**BLUETastefuls.com** 



## EXPLORE THE GREAT OUTDOORS IN THE MIDDLE OF EVERYTHING

64 state parks, 270 trails, 2,900+ lakes, and 7 scenic byways, when it comes to Illinois there's no shortage of adventure. Subscribe to Enjoy Illinois or visit our website for your guide to hiking, climbing, biking, swimming, ziplining, and more.

EnjoyIllinois.com

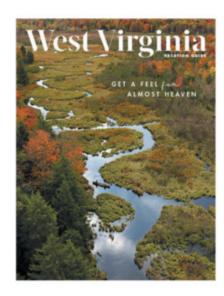


#### HAPPY HEART SHAPES ARE BACK

Find limited-edition happy heart-shaped Cheerios in a special box, each featuring the names of loved ones who inspire you to keep going.

Shop at Cheerios.com



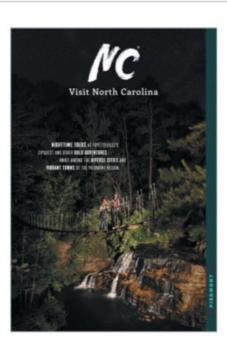


#### PLAN YOUR WEST VIRGINIA GETAWAY

Chase waterfalls, cruise legendary country roads, experience Appalachian culture, and take in Almost Heaven's stunning natural scenery.

Order your free 2025 West Virginia Vacation
Guide to get more inspiration for your own
Mountian State escape.

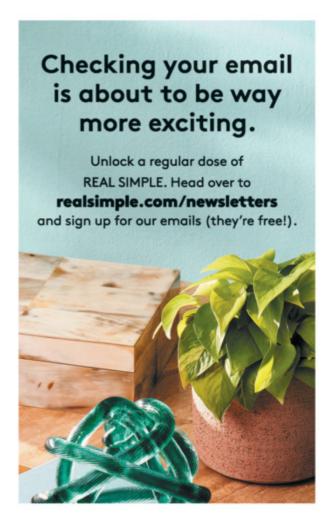
WVTourism.com



#### FOR REAL, VISIT NC

Elsewhere, travelers are spending their vacations sitting in gridlock. Instead, veer off the beaten path and explore all the gems North Carolina's 100 counties have to offer.

VisitNC.com







In honor of our silver anniversary, we scoured the archives to bring you the smartest, most surprising advice from our pages.
We hope these tips make your life a little, well, simpler.

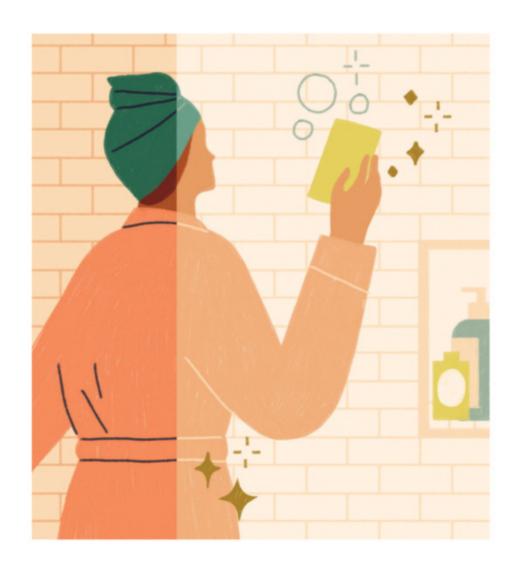
BY MELISSA MATTHEWS
PHOTOGRAPHS BY TED CAVANAUGH
PROP STYLING BY MARINA BEVILACQUA
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ILLUSTRATIONS BY ABBEY LOSSING

# ING ROARD-CARSON DOWNING PROP STYLING RY JOSEPH WANFK: VACULIM - CHELSFA KYLF PROP STYLING RY SOPHIF STRANGLO

# Our Best CLEANING ADVICE

# Fix Sticky Baseboards with a Dryer Sheet

Bathroom baseboards are magnets for dirt, dust, and hair, especially if you use styling products that attract schmutz. The solution: Wipe your baseboards with a microfiber cloth dampened with rubbing alcohol, which helps break down tacky residue. (Test a small patch first to make sure the alcohol doesn't damage the finish. If you're concerned, just use a bit of water—and do a little more scrubbing.) After the area is clean and dry, run a dryer sheet along the baseboard. It'll leave behind a waxy coating that helps repel staticky hair.



# Turn Packing Tape into a Duster

Fabric lampshades are notoriously hard to dust. You could vacuum them, or you could use packing tape, says Maeve Richmond, founder of the organizing company Maeve's Method in New York City. Press a piece onto the shade and pull it back up.

Bonus tip: Make a ring around your hand with the sticky side out and tap along the bottom of a drawer to pick up crumbs.



#### Give Wooden Cutting Boards a Salt Scrub

Zap food pigments, like beet and berry stains, from your wooden cutting boards by sprinkling salt on them and then rubbing them with a halved lemon, advises cookbook author Julia Turshen (which reminds us, Simply Julia is not to be missed).



Immediately after you towel off, spritz and wipe down your shower. This way, the soap scum won't have a chance to settle in, and the steam from your shower will have loosened any grime and mildew.



Slow Down While Vacuuming

Many vacuums do the most sucking when they're pulled backward, so go slowly during that part, says Donna Smallin Kuper, author of *The One-Minute Cleaner Plain & Simple*.

#### **Steam Your Oven**

This mostly hands-off method comes from the pros at Merry Maids:

Rub half a lemon on the bottom, where food spills.

Preheat the oven to 250°F. Fill a medium-size oven-safe bowl with water and four lemon halves, place it on the top rack, and close the door.

After an hour, turn off the oven, open the door, and allow the inside to cool enough to touch.

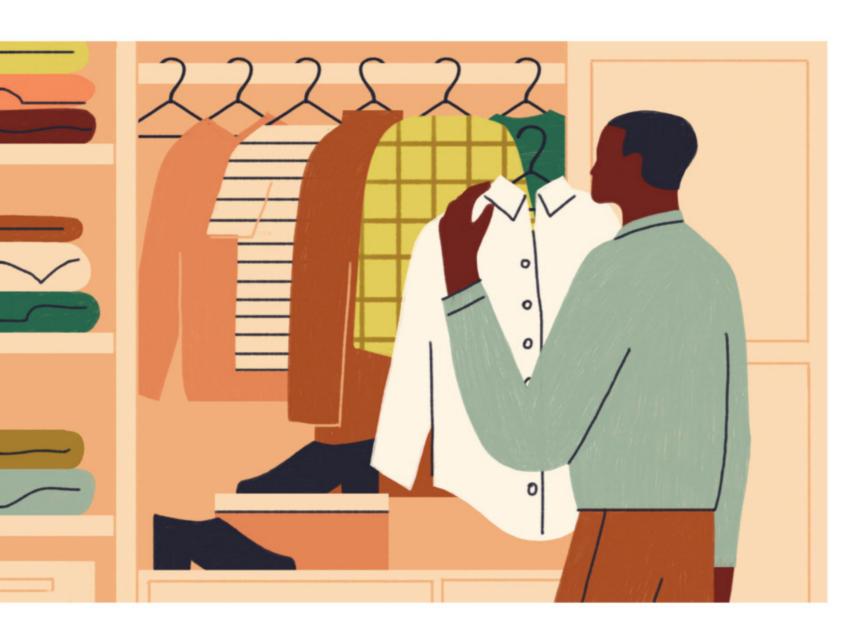
Use a damp microfiber cloth to wipe down the door and inside.

Gently rub stubborn spots with a wet scouring pumice.





# Our Best ORGANIZING ADVICE



#### **Reckon with Your Overstuffed Closet**

At the start of a new season, turn around all the hangers on the bar so the hooks face out, suggests Peter Walsh, the organizer widely credited with this now-popular tip.

Once you wear a garment, hang it back up in the opposite direction. Donate anything that doesn't switch directions.

# Rehome the Small Stuff in the Bathroom

Tired of losing bobby pins, tweezers, and nail clippers in your medicine cabinet? Hang a magnetic knife strip on the back of the door and let science do its thing.



# Break Down Big Tasks into Smaller Ones

Instead of telling yourself that you need to organize the pantry, make a to-do list of steps, says KC Davis, author of How to Keep House While Drowning. For example: "Toss expired food," "Clean sticky bottles," and "Group like with like."

# **Keep Your Sheets Together**

Repurpose ribbons from gifts: Tie them around sheet sets so individual pieces don't stray. You'll never waste time hunting for a matching set again! You can even write "queen" or "king" on the ribbon. Or store the set in one of the pillowcases.



# Add Storage to Your Refrigerator

Yes, it comes with bins.
But put in more! Bins can hold smaller items, like yogurts and string cheeses, that tend to flop around or get pushed to the back only to be rediscovered well past their expiration dates.

#### Set Up a To-Be-Dealt-With System

Keep a large, empty basket on hand during tidying sessions. When you come across something that belongs in another room, throw it into the basket and put it all away later.



# Our Best DECORATING ADVICE



#### **Hang Curtains Higher**

Like, as close to the ceiling as possible, says interior designer Elaine Griffin. The room will appear loftier.

#### Select the Right-Size Area Rug

The edges should land about two feet from the walls.

Now, let's say you've fallen for a rug that's not quite there.

Layer it on top of a larger one, says designer Erin Gates.

(Consider a natural-fiber rug.) Note: The two-foot rule doesn't apply to big, openconcept spaces. In that case, use a few to create zones.

#### Follow 3 Tiny Steps for Gallery Walls

Start with a loose color palette, add pieces of various sizes, and mix up the styles (abstracts, seascapes, florals, for example) and mediums (paintings, drawings, photos).

#### Paint with the Right Finish

Flat or matte hides surface imperfections but isn't all that durable, so it's best for ceilings and walls in low-traffic spots.

Eggshell holds up to cleaning—good in kitchens, bathrooms, and kids rooms.

Semigloss can handle scrubbing but enhances bumps, making it best for trim, doors, and cabinets.



#### Our Best LAUNDRY ADVICE

#### Skip the Fabric Softener When Washing Towels

It can leave a coating that traps stink and inhibits absorption. Same rule applies for all your gym clothes.



#### Unshrink Knits in the Sink

If your favorite sweater has been reduced to doll-size in the dryer, there may still be hope. Natural knits, like wool and cashmere, can regain their shape after a dunk in a sink filled with warm water and a tablespoon of olive oil, says Patric Richardson, coauthor of Laundry Love. Swirl the solution for a few seconds, then submerge your sweater for two to three hours. Remove it, lay it on a flat surface, and slowly, gently tug it back to its original size.



#### **Pick the Right Temperature for Stains**

Water temperature is key to getting out stubborn stains. Use cold water most of the time and especially on freshly soiled clothes because heat can help a new stain set in. Hot water should only be used for set-in stains, as it loosens fibers.

The good news: It helps detergents lift out discolorations.



#### Give New Jeans a Prewash

Before wearing new jeans for the first time, wash them alone in cold water to prevent the color from transferring onto, say, your favorite purse on your way to work! For extra protection, add a half cup of white vinegar at the start of the cycle to help seal the color.

Lay flat to dry.

#### Use Artificial Sweetener on Oily Stains

Splattered salad dressing on your shirt while out at lunch? Find a packet of artificial sweetener, rub it into the stain, and let it sit for a few minutes. Then brush it off and rinse. The sweet stuff will absorb the oil, giving you a better chance of getting it fully out in the wash.



#### **Remove Red Wine Stains with Shaving Cream**

Head to the bathroom instead of the laundry room, grab a can of shaving cream, and spray it over the stain ASAP. (Sooner is always better when it comes to treating stains.) Let the foam sit for 30 minutes, then rinse and rub the stain with your finger. It should vanish before your very eyes!

# THIS PAGE: ONI HANNERS, PROF

#### Our Best

#### **COOKING & ENTERTAINING ADVICE**

#### Start with a Clean Slate

When hosting a big holiday or dinner party, do whatever it takes to have an empty trash bin, dishwasher, sink, and dish rack when guests arrive. (This is an excellent job for kids or anyone who doesn't cook.) With these areas clear, you can get waste in the garbage, plates in the dishwasher, and crusty pans soaking right away.



#### **Chill Your Onions**

If chopping an onion makes you tear up faster than Sarah McLachlan's ASPCA commercial does, refrigerate the bulb for about an hour first. The coolness takes some sting out of the sulfur compounds responsible for the reaction.



#### **Set Your Buffet Up for Success**

To keep the line running smoothly, stack plates at the beginning, and put the silverware and napkins on the dining table, says Elizabeth Van Lierde, author of Everyday Entertaining.



Don't let soggy crusts ruin a good dessert. For a golden brown bottom crust every time, put your dish on the lowest rack, where most ovens tend to concentrate heat.

#### Store Brown Sugar with an Orange Peel

You can let out some frustration by pounding that rock-hard brick of brown sugar against the counter—or you can save your granite.

We choose the latter!
To do so, add an orange peel. The moisture helps soften the sugar overnight. Or take the preventive approach and add a peel to a newly opened bag.



#### **Make a Dessert Board**

For a practically no-effort finisher that'll please a crowd, assemble one just as you would cheese and charcuterie, only with store-bought baked goods, candy, and fruit.



It's hard to lift out that first slice without making a mess. Start by cutting two, says Jason Shreiber, author of *Fruit Cake*, who learned this trick from Martha Stewart. Then you'll have wiggle room to get in there. (Two pie tips! We clearly love pie!)







#### Poach Eggs in the Microwave

Breakfast in less than a minute? It's possible if you follow this method from Steph Chen, founder of Anyday, a line of microwave cookware: Place a half cup of water in a microwave-safe bowl and crack in an egg, making sure it's submerged. Microwave for 40 seconds or until the yolk is cooked.



#### Unstick Sticky Ingredients

Before measuring honey, syrup, or other gooey substances, run hot water on the inside of the measuring spoon or cup, and don't dry it off. Instead of clinging to the sides, the liquid will easily get where it's going. A little spritz of oil will work too.

#### Soak Fillets of White Fish

Help eliminate the fishy or icy taste of your fresh or thawed fillets by soaking the pieces in a wide, shallow bowl of milk for about 20 minutes.

(Proteins in dairy products can help neutralize certain odors.) Try it with cod, flounder, or even salmon.



#### **Hit the Stairs**

Go up and down a flight of stairs, and repeat three times. Do this regimen three times a week to improve cardiorespiratory fitness by 5% to 10% over six weeks—the same improvement you'd get if you walked for 30 minutes three times a week, says Jonathan Little, PhD, an associate professor at the University of British Columbia's School of Health and Exercise Sciences.



#### **Snack Wisely Before Bed**

Before-bed nibbles can promote better sleep, says W. Chris Winter, MD, a neurologist specializing in sleep and the author of *The Sleep Solution*.

One of his top suggestions: hummus with crackers. Chickpeas are high in the amino acid tryptophan, which can increase levels of serotonin, a precursor to melatonin. And the carbs in the crackers help make the tryptophan available to the brain.

#### Our Best MINDSET ADVICE

#### Thank Your Partner the Right Way

Try to be more specific before you fire off a basic "Thank you!" text. Say something like "Thank you for picking up the kids— I was stressed at work, and you were there when I needed you!" According to researchers, people feel more satisfied when they hear how they've improved someone's life.

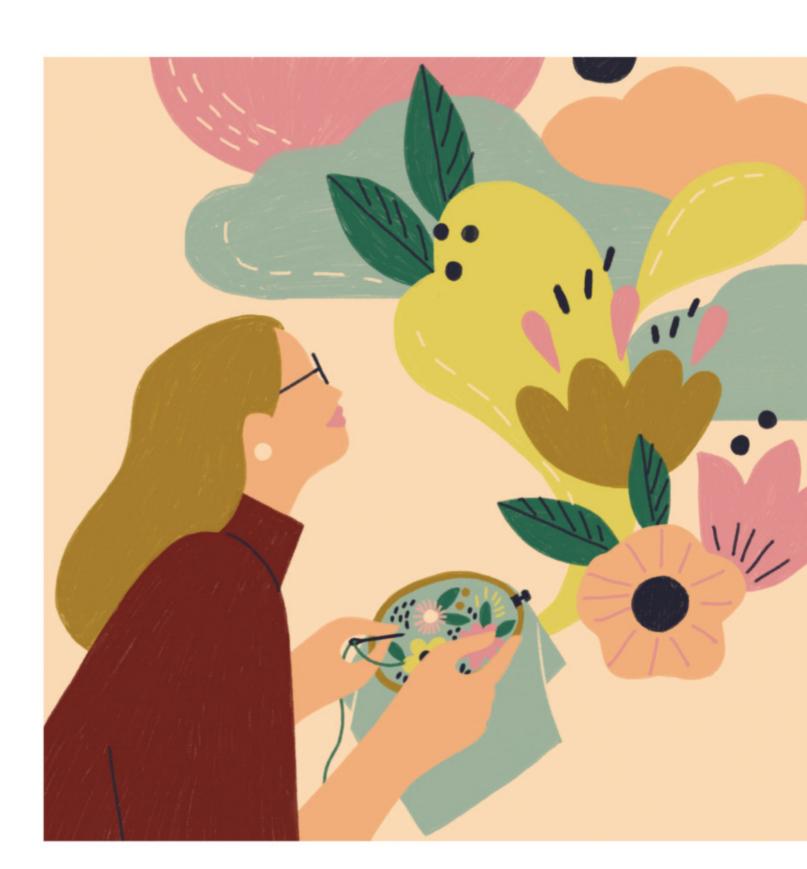


#### **RSVP Without Regrets**

We often overcommit because the future seems far off and we feel disconnected from our future selves, says Seattle-based psychologist Ann Marie Roepke, PhD. Her advice: "Think about what you'd decide if the event were tomorrow." Then, and only then, RSVP accordingly.

#### Don't Believe Everything You Think

When a negative idea about yourself creeps into your brain, recognize it as just that—an idea. "Feelings are not facts," says Olivia Verhulst, a New York City—based licensed mental health counselor specializing in trauma. Simply naming it can put some distance between you and the negative thought.



#### **Get Bored into Being Creative**

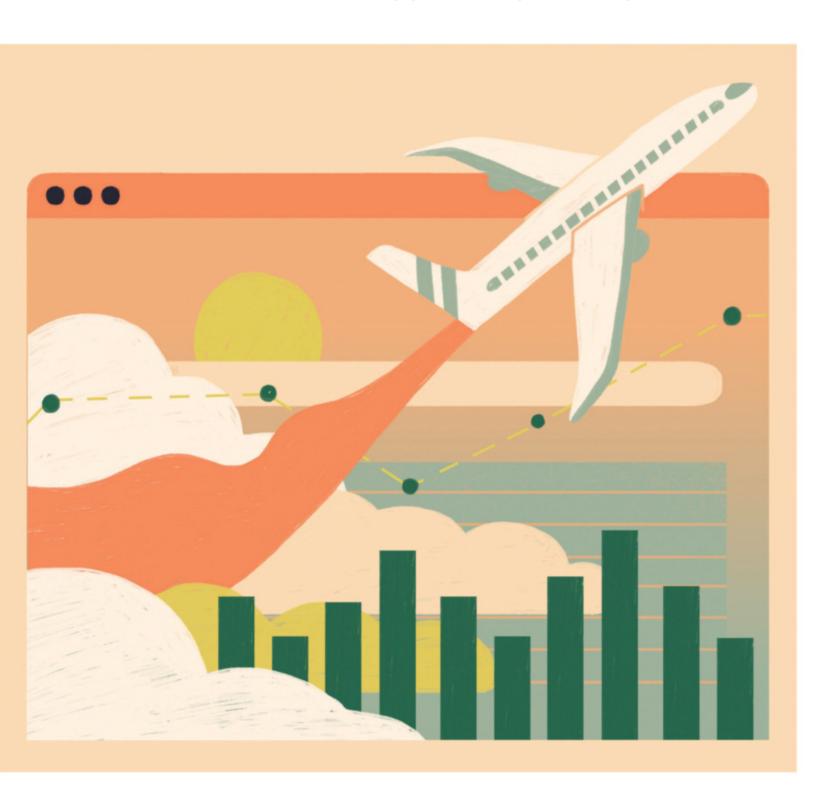
It's tempting to work on a project nonstop, but many people struggle to focus on a single task for long stretches.

Try breaking up your day—and your thought patterns—with an activity that's repetitive and not intellectually taxing, such as vacuuming or gardening. It'll give your mind a chance to wander...possibly to new ideas! When you sit back down to your work, you may find yourself getting more done.

#### Our Best FINANCIAL ADVICE

#### **Book Flights When Prices Are in the Sweet Spot**

Timing matters, says James Byers, group product manager at Google Flights. "We've found that booking airfare for international trips 101 days before departure is the most cost-effective," he explains. For domestic trips, Byers says the average lowest price hits 38 days out. These aren't hard-and-fast rules, though, so see what Google Flights has to say before you book. The site can tell you whether prices are low, medium, or high for your dates. And you can set deal alerts to notify you when prices drop.



#### Use Gift Cards Instead of Cash or Credit

If you have a tendency to overspend, try this tip from Anna Newell Jones, author of The Spender's Guide to Debt-Free Living: Buy a store or prepaid gift card at the beginning of the month for an allotted amount. Once the gift card is empty, you're cut off from shelling out any more. Keep in mind that, while most retailer gift cards don't come with activation fees, prepaid cash gift cards usually do.



#### Save Money When You Spend Money

Shopping a lot? Make it a rule that for the cost of every fun purchase, you'll put the same amount into savings, advises Kristin Wong, author of Get Money: Live the Life You Want, Not Just the Life You Can Afford. So if you buy a \$100 pair of jeans, you'd put \$100 into your account. With this method, even if you give in to an impulse buy, you're still doing something good for your finances.



#### **Steer Smarter If Your Car Starts Skidding**

The old "turn into a skid" protocol needs a tune-up. That guidance helped when most cars were rear-wheel drive. Today new advice applies: Look where you want the car to go, and steer in that direction. To avoid skids and spinouts, never stomp on the gas or brake pedal.

#### **Make an Impersonal Gift More Personal**

Though giving gift cards can feel like a fallback, research (and experience!) suggests people like getting them. Just make it special. For instance, Visa lets you put a personal photo on the card, says Patrick Kucharson, a gift consultant. Or you can add an extra present that hints at how the recipient might spend the balance—wrap up a spatula along with a gift card to Williams Sonoma, for example.

#### Ace Any & All Small Talk

Ask someone what they've been up to and you'll likely get a "Nothing much." Instead, ask what they've been reading, listening to, or watching lately. You're bound to get a good answer. Maybe even some good recs!



# ASCAKA: BRIAN DENN; PERTOME: GELLI IMAGES

# Our Best BEAUTY & FASHION ADVICE

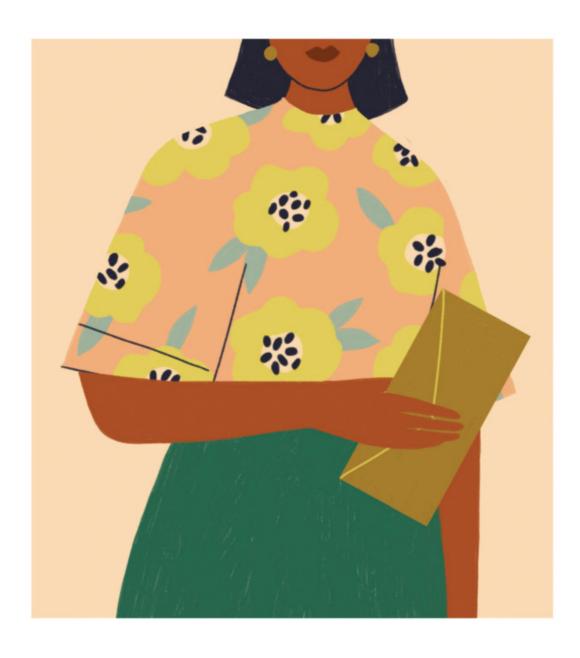


#### Declump Your Mascara

In an ideal world, mascara goes on without clumping. Unfortunately, that's not the world we live in. Make like Brooke Shields and use a little pick flosser (yes, the kind meant for your teeth) to separate lashes. Just be careful!

#### Keep Your Wipes Moist & Ready to Go

Here's a trade secret
that will help you
keep makeup-removing
wipes moist until the
last sheet: Store the
pouch upside down. This
way, the liquid gets
distributed throughout
the package,
permeating the wipes
from bottom to top.



#### Splurge on Basics, Save on Trends

Avoid blowing your money on anything trendy (read: pieces you may not love tomorrow). Instead, shell out for the basics, like a good pair of jeans, and accessorize with less spendy fun stuff—a printed blouse, a cool belt—to stay current.

#### Pamper Often-Shampooed Hair

If you have oily hair, try conditioning before shampooing. It adds moisture without weighing down even fine hair, says Los Angeles—based hairstylist Andrew Fitzsimons. It also helps reduce tangles so you don't have to work too hard outside the shower, when strands are more prone to breakage.



#### Make Perfume Last Longer

Fragrance tends to fizzle out on dry skin, so prime your application spots with an unscented cream or ointment, like Vaseline or Aquaphor.



#### **Iron Your Clothes Inside Out**

Running an iron over your clothes is one of the best ways to look polished—unless you damage them. Press the item inside out, and use the appropriate heat setting for the material. An overly hot tool can fade dark colors and create shine marks on fabrics with sheen, like gabardine, acetate, and some cottons, says Chris Allsbrooks, a textile expert in Bowie, Maryland.





The REAL SIMPLE editors spend
a good percentage of our
a good percentage of our
working hours sharing the best
ways to get stains out of clothing,
banish soap scum, and chisel
banish soap scum, and chisel
sticky substances off surfaces.
sticky substances off surfaces.
So we have strong opinions
so we have strong opinions
about cleaning products.
And here they are! Introducing
our favorite products that
our favorite products that
won in a clean sweep.

SUPERIOR

REALSIMPLE'
SMART
CLEANING
AWARDS
2025

BY ERICA LEIGH FINAMORE

BY ERICA LEIGH FINAMI LEE

PHOTOGRAPHS BY HEAMI LEE

PROP STYLING BY JI CHAN







#### A WIN FOR YOUR SKIN

#### **All Free Clear Laundry Detergent**

Beauty Director Heather Muir Maffei swears by this detergent because of how gentle it is on clothes. "I have a 3-year-old and a 5-year-old, plus I have reactive skin, which is incredibly sensitive," she says. "This fragrance-free formula is recommended by derms and actually gets clothes clean without damaging them." \$12; target.com



#### A STREAK-FREE **FORMULA THAT REALLY BRIGHTENS A ROOM**

#### **Windex Vinegar Glass Cleaner**

It's amazing what a difference clean windows can make. This stuff forgoes a lot of the typical chemicals but still leaves a streakfree shine that Managing Editor Tara Cox is always impressed with. "It has all the glass-cleaning power of vinegar but isn't stinky like straight vinegar," she says. \$4; amazon.com



#### THE SPRAY THAT **MAKES LASAGNA** NIGHT EVEN BETTER

#### **Dawn Platinum Plus Powerwash Dish Spray**

Scrubbing a casserole dish was once a dreaded task requiring lots of muscle. Until Dawn Powerwash! With a few spritzes, food melts off. "I use it on everything—my counters, stove, fridge shelves. I don't know how I survived without it," Features Editor Melissa Matthews says. \$5; target.com



#### THE MOST LIKELY TO SUCCEED & BEST SMELLING

#### Mrs. Meyer's Clean Day **Multi-Surface Everyday Cleaner**

Associate Editor Ria Bhagwat will tell you that this all-purpose spray lives up to its name. "It deep-cleans everything in one shot—I'm talking tables, bathtubs, sinks, and counters," she says. Plus, the lemon verbena scent is pretty darn irresistible. \$5; mrsmeyers.com



#### THE SPONGE THAT'LL MAKE YOU FEEL LIKE HOUDINI

#### **Mr. Clean Magic Eraser**

Is it really magic? Sure feels that way! The Magic Eraser can do dozens of things, like refresh white sneakers, clean shower scum, and remove scuff marks. A note of caution from Editorial Assistant Abby Fribush: "It's so satisfying, once I start scrubbing, I end up looking around for more things to erase." \$5 for 6; target.com



#### AN ANTIDOTE FOR SMELLY GYM CLOTHES

#### **Downy Rinse & Refresh Fabric Rinse**

Associate Home Director Leslie Corona is a pro at cleaning and working up a sweat on long runs. "I've tested a zillion products, and this fabric rinse is the only thing I've found that eliminates bad odors." she says. The low-pH formula helps break down the stink and leaves clothes with a light, clean aroma. \$12: amazon.com



#### THE SPRAY THAT **BREAKS THE MOLD**

#### **RMR Solutions RMR-86 Instant Mold & Mildew Stain Remover**

Mold in your bathroom is a real buzzkill, but Photo Editor L.J. Whritenour says it's no match for this stuff: "Spray it onto the mold and watch it disappear." The bleach-based formula admittedly smells a little strong, so remember to ventilate for safety's sake! \$10; rmrsolutions.com



#### AN OLD-SCHOOL **WINNER**

#### **Murphy Concentrated Wood Cleaner**

This cleaner has earned love from generations. thanks to its 98% natural ingredients and ability to make wood floors. cabinets, and furniture shine. Contributing Senior Research Editor Maya Kukes raves, "It leaves my house looking deepcleaned, but without a bunch of harsh chemicals." \$4: walmart.com







#### A SAUCE STAIN'S WORST NIGHTMARE

#### OxiClean Max Force Spray

"This is my go-to for cleaning the many hot sauce stains off my son's sweatshirts," Creative Director Phoebe Flynn Rich says. She sprays it on, lets it sit for five minutes (or up to a week if she's busy!), then throws the item into the wash. It works wonders on any washable fabric (whites and colors) and on blood, grass, ink, and more. \$5: walmart.com



#### THE CLEANER THAT'S ALSO A DEGREASER

#### Krud Kutter Degreaser & Stain Remover

Could there be a more aptly named product? This nontoxic miracle spray can, well, cut crud from anywhere inside or outside your house. (Use it on your driveway!) Home Editor Morgan Noll has this to say: "I've sprayed it on some impressively crusty grease spots on my stove, and it's made them completely disappear."

\$8; amazon.com



#### A SHINING EXAMPLE FOR APPLIANCES

#### Weiman Stainless Steel Wipes

Stainless-steel appliances: chic. Stainless-steel appliances covered in fingerprints: considerably less so. "These magical wipes not only clean the streaks and fingerprints from my appliances, but I find myself actually enjoying the process of polishing surfaces from dull to shiny," Phoebe says. Of course, it doesn't take too long. \$9; weiman.com





#### THE BEST INVENTION IN THE LAST 25 YEARS

#### Swiffer WetJet Mop Starter Kit

Remember life before this mop-broom hybrid?
Neither do we. "It's a loweffort alternative to hauling out a stinky mop and sloshy bucket and great for getting floors looking and smelling good," Senior Home Editor Hannah Baker says. \$28; lowes.com



#### BRUSHES WITH GREATNESS

#### OXO Good Grips Deep Clean Brush Set

"Like toothbrushes but with stronger bristles, these get into crevices around faucets and fixtures," Maya says. She uses them to hit the tricky spots a sponge can't reach. Best of all, they've never been in anyone's mouth. \$9; oxo.com





#### SPONGES THAT WON'T SKEEVE YOU OUT

#### Scotch-Brite Zero Scratch Scrub Sponges

These blue guys are made with recycled plastic, and their scrubby side can grab grossness without doing damage. "They power through grime in bathtubs, crud on stoves, stains on pots and pans—anything," Designer Natalie Guisinger says. While they still need to be replaced often, they tend not to get as grody as other sponges. \$3 for 3; target.com



#### THE GERM TERMINATOR

#### **Clorox Bleach**

People are often wary of bleach, but there's a time and place for it (ask an infectious disease specialist). Namely, your bathroom or anywhere you'd want to kill household germs. That's when Morgan turns to the classic disinfectant. "It helps me rest easy, knowing my bathroom is truly clean," she says. \$6; walmart.com



#### A PANTRY STAPLE WITH LOADS OF BONUS USES

#### **Heinz Distilled** White Vinegar

We suggest you move this bottle from your kitchen to your cleaning closet or get a second bottle! It does a little of everything, including cleaning faucets, microwaves, and showerheads. Design Director Deanna Lowe has her own agenda for it: "I keep it premixed with a 1-to-1 ratio of water in a spray bottle for mirrors and windows." \$2; at grocery stores



#### THE TIKTOK-FAMOUS **PRODUCT THAT ACTUALLY WORKS**

#### **The Pink Stuff Cleaning Paste**

If you've spent any amount of time on CleanTok, you've likely seen people whip out this mildly abrasive pink paste and use it to conquer grout, grills, and glass. Executive Editor Lisa Freedman says it's a wonder in the kitchen as well. "It's the most effective thing I've ever used on the inside of my oven door," she raves. \$6; amazon.com



#### **YOUR CLEANING** CADDY'S MVP

#### **Bar Keepers Friend**

This was our most nominated cleaner, and it's easy to see why. The powder can gently remove rust, scuff marks, and about a bajillion other things from counters, toilets, and more. Copy and Research Chief Jenny Brown says it's a major time-saver too. "I use it when I have a cruddy stainless-steel pan and don't want to spend the day scrubbing." \$2; walmart.com



#### A LAUNDRY DETERGENT THAT PASSES THE SMELL TEST

#### **Tide Free & Gentle Laundry Detergent**

Katie is sensitive (scent-sitive?) to fragrance. "I appreciate that this is scent-free," she says. Like Heather's favorite detergent, it can also be good for reactive skin. \$13; target.com



#### THE TOOL THAT FEELS MORE LIKE A TOY

#### **Casabella Power Spin Scrubber**

Perhaps you saw Editor in Chief Lauren lannotti joyfully use a rechargeable cordless scrubber on TV. If not, Hannah has her own glowing review: "This set totally alleviated my dread of scrubbing my tiles, because it cleans the heck out of the grout and tiles without much time or elbow grease." \$50; target.com



#### SUPER (TOILET) BOWL **CHAMPION**

#### **Clorox Foaming Toilet Bomb**

No part of getting on your hands and knees and scrubbing the inside of a toilet sounds like fun. Leslie promises that these make life a lot better. "Toss one in, wait a few minutes, then give the bowl a quick swipe," she says. "They smell incredibly clean too, so they're a smart way to freshen up your bathroom before guests arrive." \$5; walmart.com



#### A TOP MOP THAT PUTS OTHERS TO SHAME

#### O-Cedar EasyWring RinseClean Spin Mop System

While the Swiffer is great and all, sometimes mopping really is the way to go. Luckily, this one eliminates one of the worst things about the chore. "The bucket has two separate water tanks, so you never have to mop with dirty water," Lisa says. "And the dirty side has a very effective built-in spinner." \$50; target.com



#### A CLEANER FOR **YOUR CLEANER**

#### **Affresh Dishwasher** Cleaner

Yes, you have to clean the things that clean other things, Lauren says. "Degunking your dishwasher filter can only get you so far, as you know if your machine ever smells like wet dog." Between deep cleans (and sometimes in place of them), she drops in a tablet and lets it get to work on limescale and mineral buildup. \$9 for 6; amazon.com







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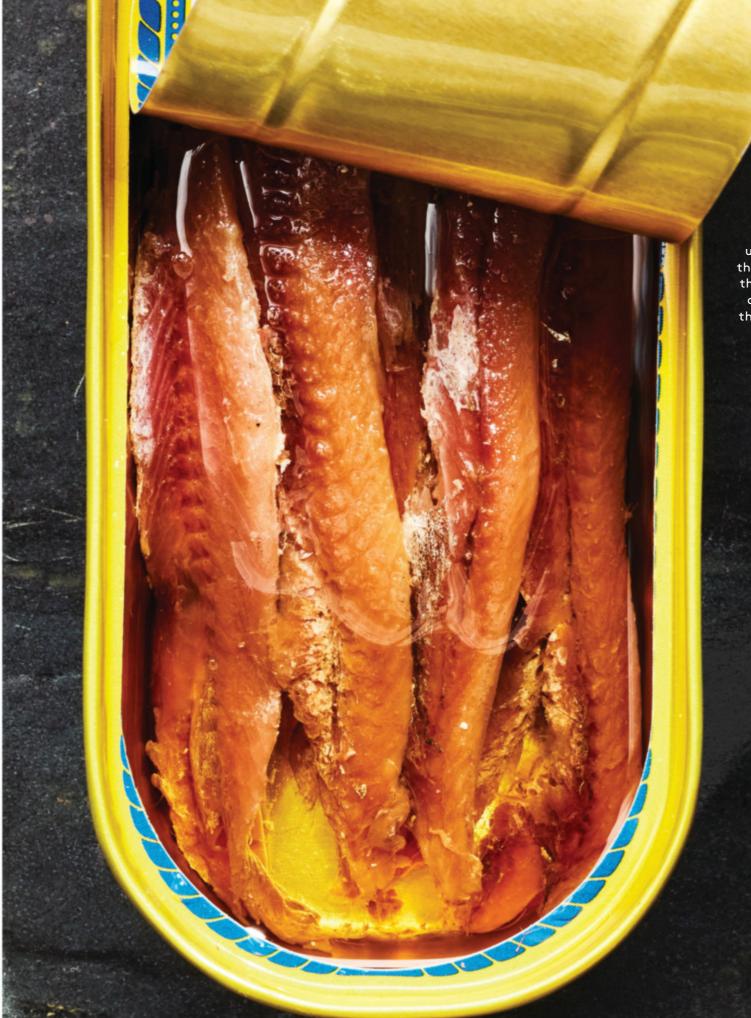
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THE STAPLE

#### TINNED **ANCHOVIES**

An umami bomb every cook should have handy BY JENNA HELWIG

#### **WHAT THEY ARE**

These teeny-tiny saltwater fishies pack a rich, meaty flavor, says Becca Milstein, cofounder of Fishwife Tinned Seafood Co. and coauthor of The Fishwife Cookbook. "The best ones come from Italy and Spain."

#### **HOW TO USE THEM**

Milstein suggests thinking simply. "Try them over buttered sourdough bread, a soft-boiled egg, or juicy tomatoes," she says. Only slightly less simple: Heat one or two fillets in olive oil, breaking them up with a spoon, to boost pasta sauce or drizzle on veggies. Or whisk a finely chopped fillet into salad dressing.

Photograph by Victor Protasio

APRIL 2025 REAL SIMPLE 91



Our most popular supper solutions from the last 25 years

#1 / Weeknight Chicken Potpie

ACTIVE TIME 20 MINUTES TOTAL TIME 40 MINUTES SERVES 4

✓ One Pot



- 2 Tbsp. unsalted butter
- 2 Tbsp. all-purpose flour
- 2 cups chicken broth
- 3 cups (14 oz.) shredded cooked chicken (from 1 rotisserie chicken)
- 2½ cups frozen vegetable blend (from a 12-oz. pkg.)
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 1 Tbsp. chopped fresh thyme or rosemary
- 1/2 tsp. garlic powder
- 1/2 tsp. kosher salt
- 1/2 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 1 sheet frozen puff pastry (from a 17.3-oz. pkg.)

**PREHEAT** oven to 425°F. Melt butter in a large oven-safe skillet over medium until foaming subsides. Stir in flour; cook, stirring, until smooth, about 1 minute.

**GRADUALLY** stir in broth, then chicken, vegetables, cream, thyme, garlic powder, salt, and pepper. Bring to a rolling boil over medium-high, stirring often.

pastry sheet over filling in skillet. Cut a few small slits in top of pastry. Bake until golden brown and bubbling, about 18 minutes.

**PER SERVING:** 609 Calories, 35g Fat (19g Saturated), 148mg Cholesterol, 4g Fiber, 38g Protein, 36g Carbs, 1,167mg Sodium, 2g Added Sugar



throughout, 7 to 8 minutes. During the last 2 minutes of cooking, brush soy sauce mixture over salmon, reserving 2 tablespoons for serving.

SERVE salmon, onion, and broccoli-rice mixture drizzled with reserved soy sauce mixture.

1/4 cup light brown sugar

1 Tbsp. rice vinegar

1 small head broccoli,

1-in.-thick wedges (about 2 cups) 1 Tbsp. olive oil

1/4 tsp. freshly ground black pepper

<sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> cup, about 2 minutes.

1/2 teaspoon salt.

PER SERVING: 559 Calories, 23g Fat (5g Saturated), 78mg Cholesterol, 2g Fiber, 34g Protein, 54g Carbs, 818mg Sodium, 13g Added Sugar

#2 / Soy-Glazed Salmon on Rice with Broccoli

ACTIVE TIME 30 MINUTES TOTAL TIME 30 MINUTES SERVES 4

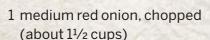
✓ Quick Cooking ✓ Gluten-Free ✓ Dairy-Free











- 1 medium green bell pepper, chopped (about 1 cup)
- 4 cloves garlic, finely chopped (about 1½ Tbsp.)
- 1 Tbsp. chili powder
- 1 Tbsp. ground cumin
- 2 tsp. unsweetened cocoa powder
- 13/4 tsp. kosher salt
- 1/4 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 1/4 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1 28-oz. can fire-roasted diced tomatoes, undrained
- 1 15.5-oz. can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 15.5-oz. can kidney beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 medium sweet potato, peeled and cut into ½-in. pieces (about 2 cups)
  Sour cream, sliced jalapeños, sliced radishes, and/or tortilla chips, for serving

# #7 / Slow Cooker Vegetarian Chili with Sweet Potatoes

ACTIVE TIME 15 MINUTES TOTAL TIME 4 HOURS, 15 MINUTES SERVES 4

✓ Freezable✓ Make Ahead✓ Slow Cooker✓ Vegetarian✓ Gluten-Free

**STIR** together onion, bell pepper, garlic, chili powder, cumin, cocoa powder, salt, pepper, and cinnamon in a 4-to-6-quart slow cooker. Stir in tomatoes, beans, sweet potato, and 1 cup water.

**COVER** and cook until sweet potato is tender and chili has thickened, 4 to 5 hours on high or 7 to 8 hours on low. Serve garnished with sour cream, jalapeños, radishes, and/or tortilla chips.

**PER SERVING:** 350 Calories, 2g Fat (0g Saturated), 0mg Cholesterol, 16g Fiber, 18g Protein, 66g Carbs, 1,186mg Sodium, 0g Added Sugar





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#### **DEVILED EGG POTATO SALAD**

The spud-tastic party side gets a boost of protein in this zippy mash-up.

BY CRAIG RUFF

### ACTIVE TIME **35 MINUTES**TOTAL TIME **45 MINUTES**SERVES **6**

6 large eggs

- 1½ lb. fingerling potatoes, preferably multicolored, scrubbed and coarsely chopped (about 5 cups)
- 1/4 cup mayonnaise
- ¹/4 cup plain whole-milk strained (Greek-style) yogurt
- ¹/4 cup finely chopped tender herbs (such as chives, parsley, and/or dill), plus more for garnish
- 1 large scallion, thinly sliced (about 1/4 cup)
- 2 Tbsp. finely chopped cornichons
- 1 Tbsp. Dijon mustard
- 2 tsp. apple cider vinegar
- 1 tsp. hot sauce (such as Tabasco)
- 1/2 tsp. kosher salt, plus more for water Smoked paprika, for garnish

BRING a large pot of salted water to a boil. Carefully lower eggs into water; reduce heat to a lively simmer. Cook, undisturbed, for 11 minutes. Meanwhile, fill a medium bowl with ice water. Using a slotted spoon, transfer cooked eggs from simmering water to ice water. Let stand until completely cool, about 5 minutes.

while eggs cool, return water to a boil. Gently lower potatoes into water; reduce heat to maintain a steady simmer. Cook until potatoes are fork-tender, about 10 minutes. Drain and let cool for 15 minutes.

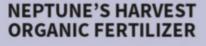
**MEANWHILE,** peel eggs and discard shells. Halve eggs lengthwise and scoop yolks into a large bowl; roughly chop whites. Add mayonnaise to bowl with yolks and mash with a fork or whisk until smooth. Stir in yogurt, herbs, scallion, cornichons, mustard, vinegar, hot sauce, and salt.

**GENTLY** fold in potatoes and chopped egg whites. Serve immediately, garnished with paprika and herbs. Or refrigerate, covered, for up to 12 hours; garnish just before serving.









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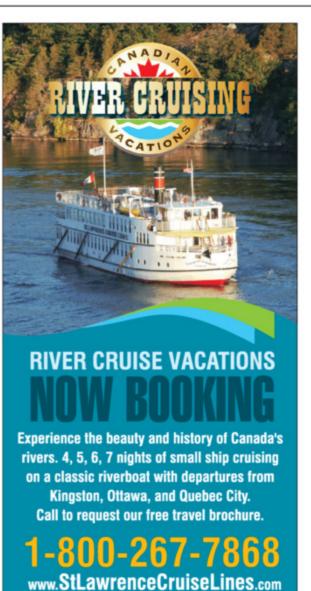
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